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ABSTRACT

This document contains 17 papers from a Universities Association for Continuing Education (UACE) seminar at which UACE strategies and objectives were reviewed. The papers focus on four broad areas: the context of the UACE's work to promote continuing education and lifelong learning; its role in promoting flexibility of provision; its relationship to other stakeholders in continuing education and lifelong learning; and revision of the UACE manifesto. The following papers are included: "Introduction" (David Watson); "UACE and Its Predecessors: Organisation and Priorities" (Chris Duke); "Continuing Education in the Mainstream: One Year On" (Michael Vaughan); "The European Union's Plans for Continuing Education" (Edward Thomas); "Part-Time Progress" (Ann Rumpus); "Distance Learning" (Geoff Peters); "Work Based Learning in Higher Education: Has It a Future?" (Derek Portwood); "The State of CVE [Continuing Vocational Education]: Three Propositions for Change" (Ian Woodward); "Access and Equity" (Terri Kelly); "The Political Parties" (Richard Taylor); "The Regional Dimension" (Freda Tallantyre); "Funding Bodies" (David Grugeon); "The Impact of Research" (Tom Schuller); "Future Scenarios" (Susanne Haselgrove); "Marginalising the Mainstream" (Hywel Francis); "Unfinished Business--The Continuing Role of a Continuing Education Association" (Maria Slowey); and "Conclusion: UACE and the Future" (David Watson). (MN)

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UNIVERSITIES ASSOCIATION for *Continuing Education*

Occasional Paper No. 20

# From Continuing Education to Lifelong Learning: A review of UACE strategy and objectives

Papers arising from a UACE seminar
held at Aston University, 9 September 1996

January 1997

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**FROM CONTINUING EDUCATION TO LIFELONG LEARNING:**
**A REVIEW OF UACE STRATEGY AND OBJECTIVES**

## CONTENTS PAGE


**INTRODUCTION**

David Watson 1

**THE CONTEXT**

Chris Duke, UACE and its Predecessors: current organisation and priorities 7

Michael Vaughan, Continuing Education in the Mainstream: one year on 21

Edward Thomas, The European Union's Plans for Continuing Education 29

**TOWARDS FLEXIBILITY OF PROVISION**

Ann Rumpus, Part-Time Progress 43

Geoff Peters, Distance Learning 53

Derek Portwood, Work Based Learning in Higher Education: has it a future? 61

Ian Woodward, The State of CVE: three propositions for change 69

Terri Kelly, Access and Equity 79

**MAKING FRIENDS AND INFLUENCING PEOPLE**

Richard Taylor, The Political Parties 93

Freda Tallantyre, The Regional Dimension 99

David Grugeon, Funding Bodies 113

Tom Schuller, The Impact of Research 119

**A REVISED MANIFESTO**

Susanne Haselgrove, Future Scenarios 127

Hywel Francis, Marginalising the Mainstream 133

Maria Slowey, Unfinished Business: the continuing role of a continuing education association. 139

**CONCLUSION**

David Watson, UACE and the future 151

Glossary 155

Notes on contributors 159

# FROM CONTINUING EDUCATION TO LIFELONG LEARNING

## INTRODUCTION

1996 was a highly volatile year for UK higher education, and not least for continuing education. At the level of the sector as a whole, planned cuts (or "efficiency gains") were dramatically increased by the government in its 1995 budget statement, a significant number of institutions forecast deficits as a result, and the government and opposition parties cooperated to keep the funding of universities and colleges out of the impending general election by establishing a National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education chaired by Sir Ron Dearing (HEFCE, 1996; DfEE, 1996). Meanwhile on the Continuing Education (CE) front, institutions were busy managing the first full academic year of so-called "mainstreamed" provision, developing new and expanded programmes as a result of HEFCE initiatives in Continuing Vocational Education (CVE), Widened Provision (access), and non-accredited Liberal Adult Education (LAE), coping as ever with a wide range of external partnerships, and wondering about the significance of the announcement of the European Union's announcement of the "European Year of Lifelong Learning" (Taylor and Watson, 1996; European Commission, 1996).

In this context the members of the Universities Association for Continuing Education (UACE) met at Aston University for their customary seminar in advance of the Annual General Meeting. As usual a broad developmental theme had been agreed in advance; in this case "to take stock of UACE achievements and objectives, to identify common cause with and differentiation from other 'leading edge' groups within the UK higher education system, and to examine possible changes to the mission, organisation and title of the organisation."

Also as usual members of the Association had agreed to provide papers as a stimulus to discussion. These papers, revised in the light of points raised and contested, form the

bulk of this volume. They are divided into three sections. In the first Chris Duke sets the scene historically for the Association, and proposes some guiding principles for its development into the next century; Mike Vaughan offers a (very early) assessment of the effects of "mainstreamed" revenue funding as well as their longer term significance; and Edward Thomas adds a vital assessment of opportunities as well as constraints in the policies of the European Union.

The participants then split into two groups. The first considered the rhetoric and realities of progress towards flexibility of provision, informed by papers by Ann Rumpus on the development of part-time HE, by Geoff Peters on distance learning, by Derek Portwood on work based learning (WBL), by Ian Woodward on CVE, and by Terri Kelly on what all of this *really* means for access and equity. Meanwhile another group approached the key issues of political and professional positioning, under the heading of "making friends and influencing people." Specific aspects were tackled under the guidance of Richard Taylor on the national political parties, Freda Tallantyre (who communicated from Atlanta via a video link) on regional partnerships, David Grugeon on the funding bodies (actual and potential - including the National Lottery), and Tom Schuller, who addressed the question of the impact and importance of CE research.

A final session attempted to marshal the lessons learned and the policy options. It was led off by three manifestoes or "visions of the future" from Susanne Haselgrove, Hywel Francis (representing UACE Cymru), and Maria Slowey (of UACE Scotland). As a brief concluding report from David Watson, the chair for the day, indicates, the journey was probably richer and more enlightening than the eventual destination, but UACE as a professional organisation undoubtedly faces the next century in good heart.

The predominant impression is of a wide-ranging and dynamic organisation with an agenda that is suitably heterogeneous for these post-modern times. These papers provide few "answers" but they pose a series of questions and issues which UACE will need to address with its characteristic energy and commitment.

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## Acknowledgements

In addition to offering our thanks to all who provided papers, and then revised them on a very short timetable, the editors would like to record their special gratitude to Jean Brownridge of the UACE Secretariat at the University of Leeds and Rachel Bowden of the Education Research Centre at the University of Brighton. Material of this kind is most valuable to the professional community if it can be made available quickly, conveniently and accurately. Without Jean and Rachel's sterling efforts UACE would not have succeeded in this aim.

DW and RT

# THE CONTEXT

# UACE AND ITS PREDECESSORS: CURRENT ORGANISATION AND PRIORITIES

**by Chris Duke**

## Preamble

The chap who came into the men's loo at Warwick propped up his papers above the towel-holder. The book title which caught my eye had to do with the death of strategic planning. Maybe in late postmodernism (a metaphor for lifelong learning?) strategy is self-delusion. Despite the order of my title logic would otherwise suggest that we begin with purposes, and with priorities within these - and prior to this values informing vision for the Association - then deduce structure and modes of organisation on the premise that form should follow and facilitate purpose.

Value and vision may seem high-flown; but we do express and try to operationalise them through our daily business in UACE. Talk of moving from Continuing Education (CE) to Lifelong Learning (LLL) offers a wide canvas and tempts one towards larger thoughts. The retrospection of this paper and the review which this event attempts require us to restate or revise our core purposes: both in terms of the nature of our ends - the kind of society represented by our aspirations - and in terms of our modes of operating. I therefore take the subject of priorities and organisation to require some reflection upon ends and means.

## Purposes and Priorities

Ends have much to do with access to higher education and the equity principles that have informed the adult education and extramural tradition since its origins in the 1870s. Relevance, application and utility of knowledge appear to constitute an

additional well-established as well as recent value, informing extramural (liberal or personal) education and development as well as continuing vocational and professional education and development (CVE, CPD). Access and opportunity have remained central to the British university adult/continuing education (ACE) tradition despite changes of name and organisational arrangements in most universities; and notwithstanding the development of new areas and approaches - CVE, CPD, part-time degrees, the "mainstreaming" through accreditation of liberal adult education, and the application of new learning technologies to distance and self-directed situations.

*Proposition one: UACE is an ideal-seeking movement dedicated to an active participatory learning civic society and polity in which accessible universities and colleges practise equity and serve their local regional communities*

**The Scope of this Paper**

It is desirable to widen the scope of this paper beyond UACE's predecessors and to include some contemporary organisations which may be allies, collaborators or competitors. This should help to clarify the business we are in, and the organisation and modes of operating more or less fit for our different purposes. It may also sharpen our sense of a unique role and contribution, thereby making clearer what our priorities are and what they should be.

The focus of the paper, as of UACE, is essentially national. None the less, in the European Year of Lifelong Learning it would be remiss to ignore the European context, which has loomed larger each of the past several years in the work of UACE. I also look wider, to an international level which may have become partly eclipsed by our closer European preoccupation. From these maps, which are a way of defining our identity and location, I turn to modes of operating and the changing arrangements for managing our business, before suggesting some issues for attention and possible action.

I therefore consider in turn our antecedents and predecessors, kindred bodies, and the wider (European and international) setting; then our membership, structures and constitutional arrangements, and character and modes of operating.

I conclude with purposes, priorities and the agenda for UACE in the light of my perception of the environment in which higher education (HE) is now operating and our role as champions of CE within HE.

*Proposition two: UACE has a unique mission, purpose, identity and capability in promoting access to and the use of UK higher education by those who have completed initial full-time education: and in expressing this purpose a special capability for leadership (a) in institutional innovation within HE and (b) in the study and development of ACE throughout UK society.*

**Antecedents and Predecessors**[1]

The immediate predecessors to UACE were the Polytechnics Association for Continuing Education (PACE) and the Universities Council for Adult and Continuing Education (UCACE). PACE celebrated its tenth anniversary with a lecture by John Stoddart about the time that the replacement was foreshadowed of the Polytechnics and Colleges and the Universities Funding Councils (PCFC and UFC) by Higher Education Funding Councils for England, Scotland and Wales - a reconfiguration of the quango oversight of HE from "binary-unified" to "unified-regionalised".

PACE was a loose, minimally structured network of individuals without formal institutional membership and formal structures, which facilitated exchange of good

[1] This is written without benefit of access to papers which are bound for Australia. I do not know what if any official PACE files there may be. The Executive Assistant who enjoyed custody of UCACE files before my term as Secretary exercised a ruthless annual cull of unwanted papers, but I understand that Stuart Marriott has care of some earlier UCAE/UCACE archives at Leeds.

practice and mutual support among those identifiable as continuing educators in the polytechnics sector. CE was not separately identified and organised in many polytechnics and colleges, reflecting a tradition of local and regional involvement and community service by the whole institution. A majority of students were commonly mature age, usually part-time "CE students" from the region. Traditions of local and regional partnership for example through co-operative (sandwich) education were also strong, prefiguring the current importance of work based learning (WBL). The mission and identity of the polytechnic as a CE enterprise left CE as a distinct organised sub-system weakly bounded and focused. This characteristic continues in the formally unified system, and shows up in the generally lighter participation of ex-PCFC sector members within UACE, compared with ex-UFC sector members.

UCACE had a longer history and in turn grew out of the Universities Council for Adult Education which when I first encountered it in the 1960s was known to others, without a surfeit of affection, as the Old Boys' or Directors' Club. The last not only of the barons but also of the Young Turks who tilted at them are now fading away. The normal UCACE member was an RB (Responsible Body) university represented by Council appointment through its extramural director. The Directors met annually in leisured retreat, accompanied by wives (now "partners") to savour a region and its culture in the course of trading tips, jockeying for position, protecting their boundaries and debating ideologies.

Collectively the function and purpose of UCAE was to protect the DES (Department of Education and Science) direct grant for LAE and to compare notes on managing the respective universities. The extramural directors (and one suspects UCAE) were for example inimical to the Open University (OU) which was seen as a threat to their regional franchise to provide general higher education outside the regular degree system. On the positive side, UCACE, as an organisation of departments officially representing universities, with a protected RB income stream to its members till the end of the eighties, as well as a proud tradition stretching back to James Stuart and Albert Mansbridge, had gravitas and influence.

On the negative side UCACE had difficulty adapting to and embracing newcomers such as the OU, and new initiatives such as PICKUP. As a result the newer CVE "community", supported in the universities of the eighties by DES PICKUP funds, came close to splitting off entirely into a separate organisation. From the mid-eighties a large, quite high profile, annual PICKUP or CVE in higher education conference was convened, usually led by senior members of UCACE acting independently of UCACE. Until the early nineties this operated through a kind of self-perpetuating college; the inherent instability of this arrangement led progressively through informal and formal co-operation with UCACE into full incorporation into the UACE identity and programme - witness the juxtaposition of the UACE AGM and annual CVE Conference in 1996.

The UFC-sector antecedents to UACE must thus be recognised as tensed between the LAE-RB and the CVE-PICKUP traditions: two streams flowing together with PACE to create UACE this decade. The ultimate success of UCACE in containing the LAE-CVE tension is also a way of reconstructing the transition from UCAE to UACE, although there were also other important cultural changes, notably in terms of age, gender and the distribution of power and authority in the organisation.

**Kindred Bodies**

The strongest partner and kindred spirit in England and Wales is NIACE, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, formerly the National Institute of Adult Education (NIAE) which, with its pre-NIACE (British IAE) antecedent this year celebrates a 75th anniversary. Note that UCACE adhered to "adult and continuing" where NIACE moved more easily from "adult" to "adult continuing", thus going through or past the liberal-vocational dichotomy.

NIACE has institutional (mainly) and individual membership. Its constitution and representative forms are quite complex and quite frequently reconfigured. It has moved swiftly and effectively to a highly entrepreneurial mode in which most of its income is "earned" in the market-place rather than derived from fees or government grant. It is now subtitled the adults' learning organisation, and narrowly avoided entirely substituting "learning" for "education". Its flagship is Adult Learners' Week each May, now widely supported by home and European public funds as well as by other contributors, and widely acclaimed and emulated overseas. NIACE enjoys a high profile and considerable influence especially with the DfEE (Department for Education and Employment) and some other central government departments as well as with TECs and local government. Its Associate Director for HE is also a DfEE senior officer and now an active ex officio member of the UACE Executive. In this and other ways the NIACE-UACE affinity is expressed through increasingly effective partnership. At the same time NIACE and UACE are periodically in direct competition, both for position and influence in governmental (and other, political and industrial) lobbies and for research and development grants for instance from HEFCE.

When PACE and UCACE merged, a PACE splinter group retained control of PACE funds and created a new body, FACE (Forum for Advancement of Continuing Education). FACE has adopted a clearly competitive stance vis-à-vis UACE, explicable in terms of its genesis in sometimes strained pre-merger negotiations. FACE has individual membership open to anyone interested in or working in CE, and is much wider than UACE in this respect, but less authoritative by virtue of the nature of membership, as well as more diffuse and nominally less focused in higher education. It has however been effective in widening influence with significant bodies, notably HEFCE and for a period NIACE. UACE under the leadership of its current Chair has sought partnership through reciprocities and programme collaboration with FACE, but while approaches have been productively reciprocated in the case of NIACE they have proved barren with FACE.

NIACE in recent times enjoyed hegemony within a cluster of publicly funded (quango-type) bodies with specific ACE objectives: to limit ourselves here to the acronyms, ACACE, REPLAN, UDACE, ALBSU. Of these only the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit now survives. Other specialised bodies are concerned with aspects of the UACE ACE brief, none of them significant players on the national scene. These include(d) the Association for Recurrent Education, the Association for Part-time Higher Education, the Forum for Access Studies, and the British Association for Literacy in Development.

Regionally/nationally UACE has Scottish (inherited from UCACE and of long standing) and Welsh branches, and there are good prospects for an all-Irish UACE branch or association in due course. The Scottish sister organisation to NIACE (SIACE) was disbanded some years ago.

Alongside UACE may be identified in respect of research the Society for Research in Higher Education (SRHE), with which UACE co-operates amiably from time to time. The most significant partner to UACE for research into ACE is SCUTREA (Standing Conference for University Teaching and Research in the Education of Adults). Relations with SCUTREA, originally an early seventies "Young Turk" breakaway from UCAE, have been consistently cordial in recent years, with frequent direct collaboration and complete absence of competitive rivalry. SCUTREA's purposes are clearly professional and academic networking and development, and avowedly apolitical. This provides easy complementarity with UACE, which has been expressed in the self-denying UACE ordinance not to promote a "rival" UACE research network, as well as many joint seminar ventures.

Space precludes full mapping of another set of significant players and in some sense at least spasmodic partners to UACE. It must suffice simply to mention for instance (acronyms only) the CBI, the TECs, HEFCE, HEFCW and SHEFC, HEQC, HESA, the TUC, the WEA and the Labour Party (in particular), as well as more obviously CVCP and SCOP. In the past there were DES, ED and TEED, CNAA, NAB, UGC, UFC and

PCFC. Prospectively one would look for FEFC, FEDA and what is now called the Association of Colleges, if the UACE rhetoric of access and student facilitation is to carry meaning. More problematic appears to be any relationship with NCVQ. There is some contact mainly through common membership with bodies like SEEC at a regional level; one wonders about Regional Government Offices as well as HEFCE regional offices in the near future. Scanning such a list alerts us to the relevant map for UACE operation and influence, with whom and against whom we may be playing for what.

**The Wider Setting**

Historically there have been loose ties, mainly through individuals' international beliefs and affiliations, with such bodies as UNESCO and since its formation in 1972 but mainly via NIACE with the International Council for Adult Education. Links for instance with ICUAE have been entirely via individuals. UCACE sustained and UACE has continued an associate member relationship with a few overseas universities which has allowed individuals to express solidarity through association on behalf of their institutions but otherwise left UACE untouched. Annual conferences have accommodated visitors from many parts of the world as individuals, granting ease of access to the UK CE within HE community. Countries with a British Commonwealth tradition and somewhat similar institutional histories if not current arrangements tend to have featured more strongly than other countries, with the exception of the United States where there has been long-standing reciprocity in respect of participation in annual conferences.

UACE has been less deliberately active internationally than SCUTREA which is a professional association of scholars, understandably more locally focused on national policies and lobbying. In this it has resembled NIACE rather more. NIACE is, like UACE, a national lobbying body with mainly institutional membership the interests of which are more local and pragmatic than idealistically international. In Europe there

has been keen U(C)ACE interest, expressed of late through the agenda of the International Network. This is essentially European, with focus almost entirely on prospects for funding from the European Commission (EC), and a keen eye to the goings-on of such new European associations as ESREA and EUCEN. (The old European Bureau of Adult Education, EBAE, now retitled Association, is a vehicle for NIACE but not UACE European activity.) UACE's direct European participation is limited by the absence of sister bodies on the Continent and the latent competitiveness (with its own membership) of anything to do with EC funding. Its lack of collaboration with North American sister organisations may be explained by distance and lack of a common pragmatic as distinct from professional agenda.

**Membership**

UACE remains an association of universities together with a small number of colleges of higher education and a few associate (institutional) members. Almost every UK university is now a member of UACE, and the authority this bestows is acknowledged by the Funding Councils. The few missing cases are explicable by local quirks of institutional history, character or leadership. There is now a single basis of membership with each higher education institution able to nominate annually either one or two members for Council, only one of whom has voting rights. However, the necessity for two representatives, one for LAE and one for CVE, has gone. Participation is enjoyed by many more individuals, through the Association's Networks and other ad hoc bodies and events. The bulk of the cost of UACE is thus hidden, shared among those who take active part at their own or their institutions' expense. A recent consultative exercise consequent on the PACE-UCACE merger identified some hundreds of individuals in different universities wishing to take part in subcommittee or network activities.

Size is seen as a problem by those managing several of these bodies, notably at present the CVE network. Membership of UACE automatically bestows participating rights in

the Networks as also, within those countries, in UACE(S) and UACE(Cymru). A presumption is that this would apply to any future English (or Irish) regional bodies of UACE. Networks - and possibly in future regional associations of UACE - have been proposed and in some cases grown up vigorously and freely. The anxiety felt at Executive as well as Network level about managing all this could be a problem: failing to facilitate such needs invites fragmentation or migration to other bodies and weakening of UACE; it may be necessary to relax more and let many Network flowers bloom, and die, rather than try to control and predetermine them too closely.

**Structures and Constitutional Arrangements**

The Annual General Meeting and the periodic meetings of Council four or five times a year provide UACE with its formal governance. Management is through an Executive meeting 5-6 times a year with a strong underpinning of correspondence and telephone work. There are two key annual conferences: the long-established Easter conference handed down in ever-changing form via UCACE from UCAE; and the annual CVE conference, traditionally in the autumn, which is now built into the UACE calendar. The AGM has come to provide the occasion for a third significant event open to the full membership.

Executive is supported by sub-committees and ad hoc delegations. Its key officers are a Chair, always a Vice-Chancellor and a crucial link to CVCP and other senior bodies, and the Secretary, now supported by two Vice-Chairs, a Treasurer and an Editor. UACE Scotland and Cymru have standing reporting rights and requirements to Council and Executive. Like the Networks they receive small subventions towards their costs. The Networks grew out of and replaced earlier Sub-Committees. Like them they derive not from Executive but from Council. They are the essential forum for active professional life and development work in UACE. Professional energy derives mainly from the Networks and flows up for UACE action where required to Council. Political and lobbying activity derives mainly from officers and Executive who have come to be

trusted increasingly from the late eighties with acting on behalf of Council where short lead times pose a choice between quick action and inaction. Executive has been empowered to bid for contracts as well as to make submissions and give evidence: several contracts have been won by U(C)ACE and executed by members after competitive internal bidding, with a small commission to U(C)ACE.

**Character and Modes of Operating**

This account has implied several distinctive features of UACE. One is its collegial, indeed convivial, character, based in trust, common purpose and often keen affection, which justifies continuing use of the term "movement". Reasonably rigorous but not overly bureaucratic democratic forms and procedures are energised through close and often quick-footed informal operations. The Association has contrived to avoid getting into conflict with its own membership, and steered through the problems of relating to CVCP and the HEFCs; here a sectoral interest could easily lead to conflict with the purposes of institutional chief executives expressed via CVCP and SCOP. Continuing leadership by a Vice-Chancellor is important. With one exception UACE has enjoyed productively constructive relations with others dedicated to CE within HE. Its international profile and work have been modest. It is productive in the arena of professional development, more at an institutional than an individual professional level, as conference proceedings and other publications attest. It enjoys standing and can claim a creditable record of representational work and lobbying. It has at least ameliorated damage caused by recent government policies, as well as contributing to some surprising successes such as temporary research, ongoing CVE funding, and new forms of support for non-award bearing provision.

**Current Priorities?**

This concluding note is more of a set of pointers and an invitation than a prescription.

- At the Leeds Conference this Easter Peter Scott observed that "mainstream HE appears more and more CE-like", but also warned us that the interstices, the creative spaces in organisations, were being reduced. Maybe finding and creating these spaces should be our central mission, albeit a somewhat covert one.

- Packing my books the other day I happened upon Karl Popper's *Open Society and its Enemies*. Maybe our core business is to do with ensuring that universities remain within and work for an open society.

- We are at the end of an era, with the reduction to penny numbers of CE departments having clear academic aspirations and leadership (watch the current professorial retirements and their consequences: count the ex-RBs which have disappeared as separate departments). Maybe the priority is to institutionalise in some new way study, research and training in CE and lifelong learning.

- We now have an adult majority in higher education, but are threatened by the deepening of the line between FE and HE, threats to Access from the standards and excellence brigade, and the dangers of a two- or three-caste HE system. Maybe the overriding priority is to create new forms for the promotion and support of open mainstreamed adults' learning through credit and funding systems à la Robertson.

These are some possible system priorities from a CE perspective, which we may each also engage with or ignore in our own institutions. For UACE they offer possible priorities in an agenda for action. A second set of questions for the Association concerns its behaviours and priorities as an organisation, to sustain the means to achieve agreed ends. This paper has raised some issues for consideration here as well as on the external agenda. They concern the unique contribution UACE can make, given the nature of its antecedents and legacy, its membership, style and culture. The message is in one sense rather conservative: to retain the distinctive features which

have allowed UACE to operate as effectively (externally) and as congenially (internally) as it has.

This is not to invite complacency. We are younger, more feminised, than a few years back - witness the company at recent annual conferences and most network meetings. We have an unusually accomplished, well placed and yet accessible Chair and a talented, energetic Secretary who combines vision with operating toughness. These and their successors cannot be taken for granted. Sustaining a momentum towards wider membership and cultural pluralism along with clear vision and a sense of history may also require tough radical behaviour. Will we oppose the next "open university" or embrace it? Will we support WBL if it loses rather than brings us business?

It would be the cowardice of the near-departed to conclude with questions rather than answers; although it also shows deference to a near-forgotten Great Tradition of question-posing (from Socrates to Mansbridge to post-modernism?). I conclude instead with,

*Proposition three: UACE should retain its inherited social and civic purpose for accessible, directly democratic universities which serve their regional communities; that it should strive for congruence between its precepts and its own modes of operating; that it is ruthlessly radical about completing the transition from "extramural" to institution-wide identity, focus and responsibility; and that to this end it now adopts the term lifelong learning to become the Universities Association for Lifelong Learning.*

## CONTINUING EDUCATION IN THE MAINSTREAM: ONE YEAR ON

**by Michael Vaughan**

The context of this note, one of three prefatory papers to a more detailed discussion of specific issues, and its timing, being prepared as the 1995-96 returns to the Higher Education Statistics Agency are being made, makes it inappropriate to attempt any fine grained analysis of detailed changes in provision over the first year of the new funding regime. This context does, however, offer the opportunity to reflect on the papers given at the 1995 UACE AGM (Taylor and Watson, 1996) and to reassess their importance in the light of the steady flow of policy papers from the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the European Commission (EC) which will continue to reshape the environment of higher education.

### The 1995 Papers

The tenor of papers given to the 1995 Seminar is clearly summarised by Richard Taylor in his editorial postscript. It is of a shared sense of loss for a long era of ideological commitment to the project of liberal education, the extension of opportunity and the redress of social and cultural exclusion; what Fred Gray and Bill Williamson aptly characterise as "the modernist (Enlightenment) project". It is also on the part of some writers, Taylor included, a more local loss of independence from the universities which have hosted the Continuing Education (CE) Departments. These are generally perceived to be antithetical to the objectives and strategies of liberal education, mired in unreconstructed academic constraints and pedagogies and the bureaucratic servants of quasi-government funding and quality agencies. In former PCFC institutions this loss is less felt but is echoed by the perception of challenge from other external, less enlightened, quarters.

The defence against this loss is equally characteristic of a number of the authors, "if we are not both careful and 'quick on our feet' the CE community runs the risk of becoming the pale and inadequate reflection of the *whole* University system." (Taylor and Watson 1996, p. 95).

But what of this system? It has been the policy of the government agencies to treat the system as homogeneous. This is mirrored in UACE's own corporatist tendency, a unified voice. It permeates the construction of the CE agenda as distinct from, if not oppositional to, a putative homogeneous mainstream. Yet we all well know that the system is increasingly heterogeneous and institutions sharply differentiated. We know that participation in initial HE has grown fivefold in the post-war period and that many universities have more than 50% of their students making their first HE enrolment over the age of 21. "Mirroring the whole system" might generate a richly diverse construct.

Of course wider participation in increasingly heterogeneous institutions does not guarantee correlative changes in the education on offer let alone reflect the traditions of liberal education. Neither, however, does it predicate an illiberal or instrumental education despite the rhetoric of our paymasters.

In short, the tone of the papers is not auspicious but defensive. It warns us to fear the worst and to plan around the margins of mainstream formula funding to defend what may be at risk. Within the "community of professionals" this has led to continuous adjustment to maximise Departmental, institutional or sectoral benefit in ways well documented in the collection and subsequently evidenced in our gatherings. There is little talk of common cause for shared ends with colleagues in the mainstream, a theme to which this note will return in conclusion.

**HE Policy Development**

What then of the world of mainstream HE in the intervening year and its bearing on our concerns? This has, after all, been the European Year of Lifelong Learning, a potential flagship for our voyage into uncharted waters. Despite the characteristic indifference of the UK Government, the occasion of the European Year has given rise to certainly the richest statement of the purposes of education in the Commission 'White Paper' on Teaching and Learning (European Commission, 1995). Coming as it does from the Directorate headed by a former Socialist Prime Minister (Edith Cresson) it is unsurprising that it voices a ringing commitment to those aspects of social and cultural formation which can enable critical participation in the affairs of the community. Others will, no doubt, say more on this. I would, however, note in passing the high reputation held in the EU by UK universities with respect to their commitment to CE, their willingness to expand their constituencies and their supportive pedagogies.

In contrast to this wider vision of an educated society we were firmly reminded by the UK Government in their publication "Lifetime Learning" of the limits of their perception and by implication of our task (DfEE, 1995). This document exemplifies the instrumentalist agenda for lifetime learning of the newly unified DfEE. It reasserts the primacy of National Training Targets which in turn embed National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) as the benchmark. It also obliges providers of education and training to meet the new policy demands in the "learning market" and further enumerates a series of funding levers to ensure progress towards the Targets. In all of this it represents the worst fears of the former CE Departments made manifest. It is however the extreme position and in one dimension does no more than identify a real training need already addressed by universities through Continuing Vocational Education and Professional Development, taught Masters programmes and research led short courses. It is rightly part of, but need not wholly constitute, our own agenda.

Despite its rhetoric the document makes few direct policy proposals, largely limiting itself to rehearsing policy successes. In HE these include the growth of student numbers and the opportunity offered by modularity and credit accumulation for increased participation in lifetime learning at marginal cost (DfEE 1995, 4.10). Alongside this there is positive reference to the Further Education funding methodology "which promotes higher outputs, efficient costs and greater competition in recruiting and retaining more adult learners" (DfEE 1995, 4.7). It is not, therefore, surprising to find the most recent HEFCE Consultation Paper, "Funding Method for Teaching" (HEFCE, 1996a), proposing a funding mechanism which "will enable full-time and part-time students to be considered and funded together" by adopting a "notional unit system" and inviting institutions to describe their provision in relation to unit allocations. In addition, whether or not independent of special funding initiatives, funding weight will be attached to "student related factors" including mode of study and individual characteristics such as age, entry qualification, et al. Such a policy might be thought some protection against virement away from CE constituencies. Where funding changes are to be effected by the (re)allocation of student numbers such allocation may be based on institutional response to national priorities and to regional need. This is consistent with the remark in the final response from HEFCE on "Funding the Relationship: HE in FE Colleges" which prioritises FE-HE partnership development in the context of planned provision for regional needs (HEFCE, 1996b). Although "Funding Method for Teaching" is consultative it would be surprising if these recommendations did not reappear in some guise in a revised funding methodology.

What messages do these loosely connected texts hold for us in the business of Continuing Education in its widest sense? Firstly, that more people than ever will enter higher education. Secondly, that the funding and planning framework will advantage institutions committing to the CE constituencies of local mature students, be they initial undergraduate entrants, career oriented professionals or those seeking only to enrich their knowledge and understanding. Institutions will position themselves variously in this new web of provision. Some may aspire to the model and

participation rates of American Community Colleges and will construct regional alliances with FE Colleges to achieve them, others will promote the dissemination of research led knowledge in largely postgraduate institutions. Higher education could become a more inclusive system facing problems in which we in Continuing Education are, if not experts, at least reasonably experienced practitioners. Furthermore these policy and funding shifts will put pressure on our institutions to generate appropriate provision for their selected new constituencies. Our experience should therefore be of direct service in developing new programmes and pedagogies.

**Concluding Remarks**

When the former PCFC institutions faced a period of rapid expansion and new constituencies there was talk in CE of "making the tail wag the dog". It is still a relevant message. Gray and Williamson talk of "provision (which is) responsive to students and demand led" and of "help(ing) redefine the purpose and nature of higher education". We all celebrate the virtues of Access provision, student-centred learning, new adaptive pedagogies. We understand the need to recognise what the student brings to their learning. We reflect on means of assessing learning which acknowledge diversity and which themselves enhance the quality of learning rather than simply measure its achievement. We also recognise that adults need support and guidance with respect to academic development, but take responsibility for their own lives. Why should these benefits not be available to all students? Let the tail wag the dog.

If we in Continuing Education have achieved what we claim, we should be able to work within our institutions to transform them. We should understand better than most the induction processes necessary for those entering a formerly exclusive world. We should have knowledge to impart from research into adult learning modes and experience in the design of units or modules and their assessment so that they embrace the study patterns of diverse learners.

The list is not exhaustive and there will remain obstacles to the project, but it is the only one worth addressing. In doing so we will need to make common cause with colleagues in our institutions and with friends outside, for example NIACE. After one year in the mainstream all of the external forces are looking for further transformation of the system CE has joined. Institutions will accommodate to these pressures. Working within institutions already in the throes of change and radically different from those of thirty years ago, a restated "modernist project" may yet be taken forward in the face of DfEE strategy to establish a "learning market". There may be an identity of form between the need to transform the system to satisfy instrumental economic demands and the possibility of adapting institutions to facilitate the participation of those for whom CE in all its forms has been the best they could expect from an HE system essentially designed for others. After a year in which the fairly narrow calculation of advantage has dominated our discussion now is perhaps the last opportunity to wrest some control of the mainstreaming agenda and shape it to the purposes of those students we claim to have always served.

Whatever the evidence of HESA returns the issues will remain those of ideology and principle. They will be won or lost in the nature of the education offered to students, a site largely opaque to funding mechanisms and large scale policy drivers. It is also the site where we have most to contribute to the adaptive development of HE. After a year of integration it is timely to consider what we are going to do now we are here.

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## THE EUROPEAN UNION'S PLANS FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION

**by Edward Thomas**

The aim of this paper is to describe, and to some extent explain, the current policy of the European Union (EU) on university continuing education: to see where it has come from; perhaps to get a hint of where it is going.

The present policy has its foundations in the economic and social thinking that underlay the process of European integration itself: economic security leads to greater security for society generally; it will reduce the possibility of social unrest; it will increase the probability of peace. Working within this broad philosophy, the responsibility for producing an education and training policy and the plans for its implementation was given in the late 1980s to the Commission's Task Force on Human Resources (now Directorate General XXII). The stimulus at that time was the need to prepare for the adoption of the Treaty on European Union (the "Maastricht Treaty") in 1992. A number of discussion documents concerned in part with continuing education were published by the Task Force in 1991 and 1992, including Open and Distance Learning in the European Community (CEC, 1991a), Vocational Training in the European Community in the 1990s (CEC, 1991b) and, most importantly, a Memorandum on Higher Education in the European Community (CEC, 1991c). It is significant, but not surprising bearing in mind the origins of the policy, that a report on Skills Shortages in Europe (CEC, 1991d), produced by the Commission's Industrial Research and Development Advisory Committee, was circulated together with the Memorandum. These documents were directed to higher education institutions, national and regional authorities and to the economic and industrial world and were designed to stimulate a Europe-wide debate. This they certainly did. Responses were invited and about 100 were sent in. Meetings were also held in the Member States and summaries of all this feedback were subsequently published by the Commission. The Memorandum and the feedback provide the basis

for understanding the EU's present policy for education and training (including continuing education) outlined in the Maastricht Treaty and the start of its implementation using a variety of EU Programmes (the most important of which in this context are LEONARDO and SOCRATES). Simultaneous with the first invitation to bid for LEONARDO and SOCRATES funds, the European Commission produced a White Paper on *Teaching and Learning: Towards a Learning Society* which modestly develops the Maastricht policy statements.

These are the major documents which define the EU's plans for continuing education as they stand at the time of writing (August, 1996). A useful critique of the EU's education and training policy has recently been published by Field (1996).

**The Memorandum on Higher Education in the European Community**

The ideas in the Memorandum are driven by a number of features of modern Europe. First, its population is ageing and declining in number. At the same time employers are calling for more people with higher levels of knowledge and skills. In addition the realisation has grown that the success of Europe as a single economic entity will depend at least in part on the capability of Europeans to operate across national and cultural boundaries. The Memorandum's twin responses to these challenges were to call for a much greater participation in higher education and for a major initiative in upgrading and updating the skills and knowledge of the existing workforce. The report acknowledges the importance of research in universities. It also recognises the important role that universities have in developing and transmitting Europe's cultural heritage. Throughout the Memorandum, however, it is the economic benefits of higher education that are emphasised.

Following this line of thought, the Memorandum identified five critical areas for development in higher education:

- participation in and access to higher education;

- partnership with economic life;
- continuing education;
- open and distance education; and
- the European dimension in higher education. (CEC, 1991c:II)

The first four here are obviously encouraging for university continuing education in the United Kingdom. In addition to being singled out specifically for development, British university continuing education is generally in the forefront in helping universities to increase participation and access; continuing vocational education is helping essentially all universities to develop their links with economic life; continuing education too is often at the forefront of developing open and distance education.

The link between the last area and continuing education is less clear, however, not least because the meaning of the phrase "European dimension" does not immediately leap into one's mind. In this context it is an umbrella term used by the Commission to include issues such as student mobility across national borders, transnational cooperation between institutions, the addition of European issues to course curricula, the teaching of European languages to non-language specialists, and so on. Not all of these elements are generally important to continuing education: adult students, for example, are generally less able than full-time undergraduates to spend six months or a year studying in another country. On the other hand, the part played by continuing education in most universities in language teaching is now considerable.

Overall, the conclusion of the Memorandum on continuing education is that:

> a much greater involvement in and a much more serious commitment to continuing education is needed in the higher education sector. Given the pace of the technological changes, a new balance between initial and continuing education is an absolute requirement for the future. The promotion of continuing education requires new structures at the institutional level, new national structures and policies and an impetus

> from the Commission with regard to the exchange of experience and transnational cooperation. The higher education institutions will need to make adjustments to their academic structures, to their [teaching] methods and to the systems by which they deliver their courses in order to accommodate this new balance between initial and continuing education. (pp. III/IV)

What the Memorandum does not call for is additional money to fund this greater involvement. It sees the changes taking place largely within the existing budgets.

**The Responses to the Memorandum on Higher Education**

Four summaries, written by different people, of the responses were subsequently published by the European Commission (CEC, 1993a: CEC, 1993b; CEC, 1993c). While this might seem to be an overgenerous reaction on the Commission's part, one does at least have the feeling after reading all four (and having read the same things, more or less, each time) that one knows where the consensus is amongst Europe's decision makers and commentators on university continuing education and where the points of disagreement lie.

The most striking point to emerge from the summaries is the large amount of consensus that they report. Overwhelmingly, the respondents pointed out that the role of the universities is much wider than simply to service the economy. Rather:

> the essence of universities is to provide education on a firm scientific basis, to carry out research and to serve as centres for culture and social development as well as breeding freedom of thought, critical views and inspiring new ideas (CEC, 1993b: B-30 Swedish Government Response).

The other major point of consensus which came across less directly, but no less clearly, was the willingness of higher education to help Europe master the economic and social changes which currently surround it.

The Memorandum's proposals on continuing education, with one exception, met with widespread approval: the amount of continuing education provided by universities should be increased; the boundary between initial and higher education should become more blurred; continuing education should move towards higher level knowledge and skills; it should have a more prominent position in the priorities of institutions; there should be flexible delivery of courses, including modular structures and the award of credits; resources should be shifted from initial to continuing education; and so on. All of these except one were received with varying levels of enthusiasm. Inevitably, the exception was the last. There was very little support for the suggestion of a shift of resources. The general view of the respondents was that additional finance should be sought: those parts of continuing education that could do so should become self-financing; those subjects concerned with wider social aspects that cannot be financed by the market (courses for the unemployed, for example) should be financed by governments. What also appears from the responses is that continuing education in the higher education sector is not well developed in some parts of Europe and that the structures which operate are often diverse and localised and that they function within loose national frameworks. Many universities would like their roles in continuing education to be better defined and they are concerned about the impact of the proposed changes on their present activities. In these circumstances it is not surprising that the process of change was predicted to be difficult and slow.

One sentence in the Memorandum was selected for comment in a number of responses:

> The inadequacy of the response of higher education institutions to continuing education is highlighted by the growth in recent years of corporate and private training provision, much of which parallels the

> work being done in higher education institutions with full-time students. (CEC, 1991c: 23)

Only 5% of continuing training in France takes place in universities and 2-3% in Germany, for example. The figure for the United Kingdom is about 10% (CEC, 1995: 53). Many European continuing educators are currently not aware of just how modest are the contributions of their universities. It is in the interests of Europe's universities, as well as the adults they serve, that they should be more heavily involved (Thomas, 1995).

Both the Memorandum, and the respondents, see the responsibility for making the changes resting mainly with the universities themselves, with some help from their national governments. The role of the European Community is seen, both by the respondents and by the Community, principally to be one of stimulating, providing and exchanging information, disseminating good practice, policy analysis, assisting in the training of trainers, and encouraging the exchange of students and, particularly, teachers.

**Education and Training in the Maastricht Treaty**

Education was scarcely mentioned in the Treaty of Rome and in effect, therefore, was largely excluded from the Commission's consideration (and funding). Training was, however, well established as an area of the Commission's responsibility before 1992 (and had attracted funding through Community schemes like COMETT, EUROTECHNET and FORCE). It was only with the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty that education could legitimately be included.

What the Treaty says about education is (Article 126):

- The Community shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity.

- Community action shall be aimed at:

  developing the European dimension in education, particularly through the teaching and dissemination of the languages of the Member States;

  encouraging mobility of students and teachers, *inter alia* by encouraging the academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study;

  promoting cooperation between educational establishments;

  developing exchanges of information and experience on issues common to the education systems of the Member States;

  encouraging the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors;

  encouraging the development of distance education.

- The Community and the Member States shall foster cooperation with third countries and the competent international organisations in the field of education, in particular the Council of Europe.

- In order to contribute to the achievement of the objectives referred to in this Article, the Council:

  acting in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 189b, consulting the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, shall adopt incentive measures, excluding any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the Member States;

  acting by a qualified majority on a proposal from the Commission, shall adopt recommendations.

The Treaty echoes these requirements for training (Article 127):

- Community action shall aim to:

  facilitate adaptation to industrial changes, in particular through vocational training and retraining;

  improve initial and continuing vocational training in order to facilitate vocational integration and reintegration into the labour market;

  facilitate access to vocational training and encourage mobility of instructors and trainees and particularly young people;

  stimulate cooperation on training between educational or training establishments and firms; develop exchanges of information and experience on issues common to the training systems of the Member States.

**The European White Paper on Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society**

The Treaty provides only the barest skeleton of an education and training policy. We must look to subsequent documents to find more substantial details. The one major document published by the European Union on this subject since Maastricht has been the White Paper on Teaching and Learning. The purpose of this is:

> to plot the route to [a] new society by identifying the options available to the EU in education and training. Its suggestions, guidelines and aims are intended to support and supplement education and training policies, the responsibility for which rests first and foremost with national, regional and local authorities. The objective is not to impose common rules but rather, on the basis of a broad debate, to identify the points of convergence and the actions capable of meeting the current challenges. (CEC, 1995:3)

The broad purpose of education (including continuing education) is acknowledged:

> The essential aim of education and training has always been personal development and the successful integration of Europeans into society through the sharing of common values, the passing on of cultural heritage and the teaching of self-reliance. (CEC, 1995:3)

It was not accepted, however:

> ... this essential function of social integration is today under threat unless it is accompanied by the prospect of employment. The devastating personal and social effects of unemployment are uppermost in the minds of every family, every young person in initial training and everyone on the labour market.

Education's primary task, as seen by the White Paper, is "to seek to provide a convincing response to alleviate these concerns." (CEC, 1995:3)

Against this background the White Paper presents its ideas for action to facilitate cooperation between all those concerned or to complement their activities:

- Member States are responsible for shaping and developing the organisation and content of their educational and vocational training systems. They therefore have a crucial role to play in bringing about the learning society;

- educational and training establishments must be strengthened and actively participate in setting up cooperation networks involving others concerned;

- enterprises must have an increasing role in training and must help to disseminate any new skills developed from their experience; and

- individuals must also be able to enjoy permanent access to a whole range of better targeted and more clearly identifiable education and training provision, which complements general knowledge and can be acquired outside formal systems. (CEC, 1995:31)

In order to promote these ideas and to start the implementation of practical action the Commission has identified five general objectives. These are to:

- encourage the acquisition of new knowledge;
- bring schools and the business sector closer together;
- combat exclusion;
- develop proficiency in three Community languages; and

- treat capital investment and investment in training on an equal basis. (CEC, 1995:31-32)

The Commission expects projects to help achieve these objectives to be funded by the SOCRATES and LEONARDO programmes and subsequently implemented under the EU's structural initiatives, for example EMPLOYMENT and ADAPT.

Being European is to have a cultural background of great variety and depth. The EU's view is that being European should also mean having full access to knowledge and skills throughout life. The White Paper makes a modest attempt to help achieve these aims. Its recommendations do not claim to provide a complete response but, in conjunction with the education and training policies of the Member States, to move Europe further along the road to becoming a learning society. These objectives can help to continue the educational debate in the years ahead. They "can also help to show that the future of Europe and its place in the world depend on its ability to give as much room for the personal fulfilment of its citizens, men and women alike, as it has up to now given to economic and monetary issues". (CEC, 1995:54)

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# TOWARDS FLEXIBILITY OF PROVISION

## PART-TIME PROGRESS

**by Ann Rumpus**

In this paper I am going to discuss some of the changes in part-time education: not in terms of facts and figures, but in trying to bring out some of the qualitative changes which we have, and will have, to accommodate in a mass Higher education sector.

My feeling is that there are some subtle mind-sets in relation to the role of part-time education in Higher education which urgently need to be shifted now, and that it is the job of organisations such as UACE to support this. My comments are very much backing up the excellent account of part-time education given by Susanne Haselgrove at the 1995 UACE seminar. (Haselgrove, 1996)

I suggest that if one looks back a mere twenty years or so, when many of the current academic staff in Higher education were already in post as lecturers, one could see a pattern of part-time education which was fairly polarised.

A substantial element of part-time provision was to be found in the Polytechnic sector, where there were substantial numbers of students studying for awards by day release such as the Higher National Certificate, many of whom were regarded rightly or wrongly as having "failed to make the grade" for entry to degree programmes. The very strong vocational focus, a flavour which had not substantially entered into full-time degree courses, was also regarded as "fringe".

The other substantial section of award bearing part-time education could be found in the provision of part-time degrees (some of which were at Masters level), offered almost exclusively on an evening only basis. Again this was seen as the province of a restricted range of institutions, and many universities offered extremely little in the way of part-time courses. The full-time degree therefore became the standard, to which others were

compared, and on which part-time courses were based, offering a modified version of the full-time course.

Whether the student on a part-time course could really attain the same standard of achievement without the "full-time immersion in the University ethos" was a question raised then, and still current in the eyes of some professional bodies today. There was however the assumption that the students, because this was the main preserve of mature entrants, would be able to work to the same standard with less input from the institution. The hours taught were frequently reduced in comparison with full-time courses, and the level of tutorial provision was often much less. In addition, the evening students were frequently taught by a different sub-section of staff (many of whom were exceedingly well qualified and dedicated) reflecting the attitude of many full-time lecturers that evening work was a less important activity in which they saw no need to engage.

The outcomes of these approaches to part-time education in some areas was to view part-time education as in some way secondary, and even second class, in terms of the "real aim" of Higher education. I would suggest that this attitude still lingers in some areas of Higher education to this day.

These part-time courses leading to awards were also supplemented by a tranche of professionally accredited courses, very often examined externally by the professional body, and thus demanding even less the engagement of the established academic staff.

The other important aspect of part-time provision in universities was of course the specifically designated "Continuing Education" (CE), made up of high quality courses, but designed for non-award purposes, with a commitment to self-development of the participants as a prime aim. This aspect has a high level of importance for many of those involved, and has led to some of the resistance encountered in some contributors and students to the current requirements for assessment and accreditation. In this sense this part-time provision was not seen as secondary to the mainstream but as "other".

However, it is now time for a significant attitudinal re-think across all of those involved in Higher education, in relation to the significance and relevance of part-time provision.

Both of these previous divisions of part-time education have now developed remarkably. The diversification has been not only in terms of the range of provision, but also in terms of the types of students participating. Interestingly, the diversification has in many ways brought these two strands together.

The number of students participating in part-time education is now very significant. Out of the 1,213,988 students studying at undergraduate level in Britain in December 1994, 23% were part-time. For those studying on a first degree the figure is over 16%. 66% of all students on taught postgraduate awards are part-time. (HESA, 1996)

The traditional part-time award programmes have extended into a far wider set of part-time degrees at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, many of which have a far greater emphasis on a broader application within the workplace. For instance there has been a substantial increase in the number and range of part-time degree programmes in business and financial areas.

However, the changes have not only been in the number and range of part-time programmes but also in a shift in the modes in which courses are offered. In addition to straightforward day-release and evening-only courses, students in employment are studying in a range of far more varied modes. Courses are now being offered more flexibly, with a mixture of attendance and off-campus activities, and distance learning is being much more widely utilised, often as an adjunct to attendance at college rather than a full replacement. Schemes are developing which combine open learning and the need to attend for short intensive periods of time, often at intervals of several months. This type of provision can be much more realistic when trying to cater for students, constrained by employment, who are taking courses in a specialist area, and who themselves might be geographically scattered. Communication via the internet can provide the necessary staff and student tutorial support between meetings.

There is also a small but significant number of students who are able to exploit the flexibility of their working hours, with the potential of modular and credit accumulation frameworks, to study on a part-time basis for a degree on what is substantially still delivered for most students as a full-time programme. However, lack of awareness of this segment and its particular nature can lead to academic staff making assumptions of uniformity within the cohort which can lead to disadvantaging these individuals.

A number of mature students build programmes of study based on the accreditation of their prior experiential learning (APEL), and thus bring their individual background into their higher education studies in a more formal way than before. However, this requires acceptance on the part of academic staff that this learning can be both recognised and valued, an attitude which has not reached all parts of the sector (or indeed possibly all parts of any one institution). It also does require that academic staff are prepared to loosen their grip not only on what they can contribute to a programme, but also how it can be acquired. This approach to the achievement of learning experientially has developed to a substantial increase the extent to which components of part-time programmes for those in employment can be approached through work based projects and assignments. This further increases the variety of provision in what might otherwise be classed as fairly traditional part-time programmes.

The potential for education for students in employment has also been creatively exploited by a small number of individuals and employers with the development of the most innovative of work based learning schemes. Many of these incorporate the accreditation of work based training and include the possibility of individually negotiated awards to tailor-make the degrees not only to the employment sector, but to the individual's needs. This aspect in a sense mirrors some emphasis on individual development, which was such a strong element seen in the traditional continuing education. However, I do not need to expand on work based learning as it is being well covered in a following paper.

There is also the huge potential (although little exploited yet) for part-time learners to use electronically based communications as a delivery tool. (For distance learning, see Peters, pp. 53-60.)

Employers certainly are questioning far more closely the resources they put into the education of their employees, both in terms of the cost of the time taken as well as the money deployed, and there is evidence that increasingly they want curriculum content which closely matches their precise needs.

However, in discussing the work based aspects of the development of part-time education one must always take account of the numbers of individuals who are undertaking part-time higher education without employer support, some in spite of their employers. Many of these are unemployed or on low incomes and higher education provides an essential way forward. We need to guard against the assumption that part-time education can be funded by employers: for many individuals this can only come out of their own resources, and this must be an important aspect of setting fees, unless an alternative strategy for the funding of part-time students emerges.

The progress in part-time education has been matched equally by changes in full-time degrees, brought about by the substantial increases in numbers, at the same time as the requirement for higher education to institute efficiency gains. The reduction in student funding has also had a huge impact. Full-time students in many cases are no longer able to devote themselves exclusively to studying because of their need to earn money for basic survival. Many of them have become essentially part-time in terms of their emotional and physical commitment to studying.

The definition of whether provision is full-time or part-time in fact is beginning to relate only to the technicality of the funding source for the fees, not to the students' real ability to make a total commitment. We need to take this change of ethos more into account. The commitment to paid work, and hence the inability of full-time students to be on-campus for substantial periods, requires changes to provision. We might need to support

them in more distant ways (perhaps via the internet). We should consider the creation of blocks of learning, so as to reduce travelling times and costs (these are in place in many institutions). Is there a need to require assessment which is more independent of library resources, until this is all available on line? In this way the full-time provision begins to look more like the part-time, and needs to adopt some of the better aspects of part-time provision. What has proved good for part-time students may now also be also good for full-timers. The flow of ideas is changing, we should no longer be slicing up full-time degrees to provide part-time versions, but learning the lessons of what works in a part-time mode and applying this to the strained full-time system.

The increasing participation of adults in full-time education has also changed the ethos: in 1994, 34% of first year full-time students were aged 21 or over, 17% were over 25. (HESA, 1996) These mature students are individuals who have substantial outside concerns, but who also bring perspectives to academic study often rooted in what they have experienced at work.

The current proportion of students under 21 on part-time first year undergraduate courses in the 1994 intake is only 6%. (HESA, 1996) One would expect this to increase as funding to support students becomes ever more constrained.

Whereas part-time provision was often viewed as that with the vocational flavour, with full-time programmes seen as the preserve of the pure academic, this is now changing. The graduate standards debate initiated by the Higher Education Quality Council is focusing our minds on the range of skills and attributes required of all graduates. (HEQC, 1995; 1996) This is equally mirrored in the reflections of employers (Association of Graduate Recruiters, 1995), which sets a challenge to change for higher education.

The traditional Continuing Education provision has also changed markedly. The introduction of the accreditation of these courses (with the associated funding changes) has required a change of attitude and practice on the part of staff and students: it is too soon to judge the full impact of this. There has been also the huge development of

Continuing Vocational Education (CVE), reflecting the current emphasis on, and need for, continuing professional development.

Many students are now studying on a part-time basis for credit, accumulating these credits towards an award, in a time and space frame which suits them. Fortunately there have been some developments in frameworks for credit accumulation and transfer which may help this activity in the future. (SEEC, 1996) But we have to question whether students will need or want complete awards in the future. Will studying on units of learning be sufficient given the availability of good records, clear transcripts and recognised certification? Will this alone provide sufficient support for ongoing life-long acquisition of learning? Do we have to be careful not to regard this as a retrograde step merely because it does not reflect the paths we ourselves have taken? To what extent should we be exploiting these patterns of delivery for our own training and development needs as professionals in higher education?

There is also the potential impact which franchising of courses (or parts of courses) to Further Education, and other links with this sector will have. This ties in with the current suggestions on the development of a more regionalised organisation of provision. It is likely that these developments will increase the diversity of students and modes of study even more, and the impact is likely to be on part-time provision, rather than full-time.

I would suggest that all of this change requires a change of mind-set on the part of some of our colleagues. I am not saying there will not still be a strong and very valid demand for full-time degree courses, but I would argue that this can no longer be seen simply as the norm. Although some individual institutions may choose not to engage substantially in part-time work, an increasing proportion of our activity will be of very flexible, part-time, lifelong provision. This must be seen within the sector as a whole as just as valid and mainstream an activity as full-time provision. We can no longer regard any part-time provision as the poor relation, but must support it as a way forward.

We do need to ensure that education is of high quality whatever the medium and mode of delivery. One can produce a poor and ill-thought out educational experience just as easily down the internet, or in the workplace, as through a badly organised lecture. The need for sharpness of approach and attention to quality becomes even more important when dealing with a diversity of approaches. As part of this we also need to adopt suitable modes of assessment. We need to design our lifelong learning from the base up, by identifying what we and the consumer want from it on a unit by unit basis, not by regarding any of this as a subset of a full-time programme, and then to create the opportunity for amalgamation into awards. It needs to be flexible and focused on what is of benefit to the individuals and appropriate to their working situation. No longer can lecturers in higher education be the sole arbiters of what is the "right" curriculum content.

In supporting the diversity of part-time provision the system needs to recognise and to reward the innovators. Too often such developments have arisen only due to personal commitment, at the expense of the individual's own time and energy. These developments, of high quality, appear to be vital to maintaining the relevance of higher education into the next century, and should in my view be valued as highly as research. Can UACE continue to provide the vital support and networking role, in the support of change agents within institutions, for this wider variety of part-time initiatives?

It can be concluded that the traditional modes of continuing education, full-time and part-time study are now becoming indistinguishable in many aspects. UACE as an organisation needs to reflect this reality, and this is particularly true in the light of the widened membership following the dissolution of the binary line. However, some of the developments seen as essential for the establishment of a wide system for lifelong learning as identified by the Government (DfEE, 1995) are effectively already in place, and this might offer UACE a way forward.

This analysis leads to the following questions:

- Is there any longer any significant fundamental difference between continuing education, part-time and full-time provision, and should there be?

- How can we be sure of high quality provision across such a diversified sector? Can UACE networking help with this?

- How do we respond quickly enough to the need to change the culture within organisations? What can UACE stimulate?

- What can UACE do to support the agents of change?

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## DISTANCE LEARNING

**by Geoff Peters**

### Introduction

Open and distance learning in its various guises has a long history in the UK. The London University external programme which was established in 1858 offered opportunities for students to gain qualifications by providing access to its curricular descriptions and examinations. By 1887 the University Correspondence College (now part of the National Extension College) provided tuition for London examination candidates by post.

More recently the 25 years since the first Open University students commenced their studies has seen distance education grow to a point where only 13 UK Universities have neither registered their distance learning programme on the International Centre for Distance Learning (ICDL) database nor responded positively to the 1994 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) survey of distance education. It would be surprising if some of the remaining (Buckingham, Bristol, Central Lancashire, Abertay Dundee, East Anglia, Essex, Nottingham, Oxford, Sussex, York, Teesside and UMIST) are not now involved in some form of distance education.

### Open and Distance Learning Definitions

The term distance education has in most of Europe usually been superseded by terms such as Open and Distance Learning (ODL), and in the UK labels like Open Learning, Flexible Learning, and Open and Flexible Learning (OFL) are also used.

Where a distinction is deliberately drawn between "open" and "distance", then distance education is taken to be about methods and technology from an institutional standpoint, whereas open learning starts from the flexibility experienced by the learner.

The literature of distance education contains many attempts at definition, amongst which Keegan (1980), who drew on earlier definitions by Holmberg, Moore, Peters and a French Government Law, included five integrated elements: the separation of teacher and learner; the influence of an educational organisation; the use of technical media; the provision for two-way communication; and the possibility of occasional meetings; to which he added two additional "socio-cultural" factors: participation in an industrialised form of education; and the privatisation of institutional learning.

In comparison, Open Learning may be taken to cover an educational philosophy as well as a technique, hence a UK Government Employment Department (1993) definition of open or flexible learning as any form of learning which comprises elements of flexibility which make it more accessible to learners than courses traditionally provided in centres of education and training. This flexibility arises variously from:

- the content of the course
- the way in which it is structured
- the place of provision
- the mode
- the medium or timing of its delivery
- the pace at which the learner proceeds
- the forms of special support available and
- the types of assessment offered.

More succinctly, open learning describes a very wide variety of learning arrangements which emphasise: the removal of barriers to participation; and the giving of greater

responsibility to learners not only to determine where and when they study, but also, for example, what they learn, how they learn, and how they are assessed.

It involves a positive commitment to the "widening of access to education and to the promotion of learner autonomy". (Scriven, 1991)

**Trends in Technology**

A simple definition of distance learning as organised programmes of study where the student is separated in time and/or place from the teacher shows up both the range of potential topics and some of the more recent trends.

Table One does not include franchising and conventional off-site and local extension studies/extra-mural programmes. However, in some countries programmes in which such off-campus programmes are the dominant mode of study are described as distance learning.

**Table One**

**Separation of study by proximity of teacher and learner in time and space**

| | | **Time** | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Synchronous | Asynchronous |
| | Close | **Face to Face**<br>e.g. lecturers etc. | **Resource Based Learning**<br>e.g. Open learning packs |
| **Place** | Distant | **Remote Classroom**<br>e.g. Video conferencing;<br>Tele-medicine | **Open AND Distance Learning**<br>e.g. correspondence courses;<br>"OU supported open learning;"<br>Computer conferencing;<br>Apple classroom of tomorrow. |

One of the potentially significant developments has been the increased interest in the use of technology in education. Much of this attraction centres on the use of computers and data networks to provide information and learning opportunities.

A simple history of distance education would delineate two strands: the correspondence tradition and the synchronous mode. The latter is exemplified by the decades of experience of institutions such as Stanford where initially postgraduate engineering lectures were relayed to industrial sites using cable, satellite and microwave links. Both in the United States and in Europe the interest in this "remote classroom" type activity has increased recently. Indeed, in the USA distance education is still seen by many as a method for scaling up the reach of the lecturer. In both regions the acceptability of video/satellite technologies has of late had a mixed reception. However, the use of network technologies has provided a new lease of life which has often been coupled with an involvement by a different set of personnel within institutions.

In the UK various Joint Information and Systems Committee (JISC) and Funding Council initiatives (particularly in Scotland) have been exploring the potential of the use of the Joint Academic Network (JANET and SUPERJANET) and its Metropolitan Area Networks (MANs) for video conferencing, and several multi-campus institutions have invested in video conference facilities. The potential for extending these opportunities is considerable. Already some universities are linked into local cable networks and within a short time schools and libraries and probably many homes will be equipped to participate in such opportunities. As yet the opportunities for real time collaborative and interactive working offered by the use of desk-top video conferencing and shareware software seem to have been used primarily by researchers and staff in universities, although there have been some experiments (like the OU "virtual summer school").

For students who are off-campus the synchronous set of technologies offers increased access and for the institutions the potentially same economies of scale. However, it is

probably the asynchronous technologies which offer the greater potential for educational effectiveness and student flexibility.

Already communications technologies like computer conferencing, FAX and electronic mail, provide new opportunities to bring students together irrespective of their location and to provide new learning environments. Increasingly, electronic libraries, multi-media and international information networks are as accessible by students at home or at work as they are by students on a campus.

In the Open University it is normal to consider three criteria before a new learning technology is deployed in earnest:

- Is it cost effective (on the scale and in the circumstances envisaged)?
- Is it readily accessible by students (and tutors/teachers)? and
- Is it pedagogically effective (superior to face-to-face)?

Many of the recent technological developments have yet to demonstrate that they satisfy all (and in some cases any) of these criteria. It is certainly possible that some opportunities which do pass these criteria, at least for the Open University, will be consumer services and products rather than computers and dedicated networks.

Furthermore, it is the Open University experience that in the main new learning technologies rarely usurp old ones. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses. As new technologies become available they usually add to the armoury from which one can select for a particular learning strategy in a specific environment. Stemming from this observation a slogan for those anxious to maintain the full benefits of the learning technologies might be "Multiple media rather than Multi media". However, maintaining such an approach will undoubtedly present economic challenges for universities both in terms of investment and cost effectiveness.

**Trends in Organisational Flexibility**

Internationally there has been an expansion in the number of dedicated distance learning institutions or Open Universities. In Europe most EU countries have or are establishing a state funded Open University offering a wide range of curriculum topics. Internationally at least ten countries have mega universities i.e. Open Universities with more than 100,000 active students studying with them at any one time.

However, if one ignores the central and regional China Television Universities then outside the UK this development is still dwarfed in student number terms by the distance education programmes of other universities. This is not a new phenomenon. As long ago as the end of the nineteenth century university departments of correspondence teaching were established at Chicago, and another shortly after in Queensland, Australia.

There has been a steady increase in the number of dual mode institutions, which provide both distance and conventional programmes. Although there has been some expansion in the UK, it is still modest when compared with many other countries. In the main the growth here has been at a departmental level, most notably in professional areas and business and management.

Some countries have also seen the emergence of mixed-mode institutions. Here, not only are the methods and materials of distance learning used for on-campus students, but students have the flexibility of selecting a manner of study within a modular programme.

Such changes have been most noticeable in regions where the divide between full-time and part-time study is less enshrined in public funding mechanisms and regulation than the UK. In the UK the examples are primarily in areas like MBA programmes where the economics are largely independent of public funding.

Public funding has considerable potential to promote or discourage such innovation. Reputedly, developments in Canada have slowed, and in some cases reversed, with the capping of overall student numbers, and in the UK it is difficult to see how the HEFCE proposals to weight distance education at a lower level than other forms will encourage diversity.

**Conclusions**

The background to ODL in the UK is very similar to that of continuing education. The Open University is, for example, entirely devoted to adult education and hence lifelong learning. The flexibility of time and place and the tradition of meeting the educational needs of dispersed, isolated and disadvantaged students, are similar.

What is more, the ability to distinguish between either continuing education or distance education on the one hand and "conventional" education on the other is increasingly difficult as the technologies change, the number of "full-time" mature students increases, and the cycle of lifelong learning means that students studying the same topic in the same mode may be at quite different stages in their own development.

What may distinguish both ODL and continuing education from some other innovations in higher education is the emphasis on effective student learning, especially that which grounded their experience.

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## WORK BASED LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION: HAS IT A FUTURE?

**by Derek Portwood**

Work based learning is a newcomer on the higher education scene. Has it a future? Will it become established? In my view it has a strong chance because it is providing positive responses to a set of educational, economic and social imperatives, on the basis of a new quality of relationship between key stakeholders in learning, especially employers, higher education and the individual. That quality is equitable partnership within a framework of lifelong learning. The partnership involves all the parties in contributing their distinctive resources and activities to achieve appropriate learning at personal and corporate levels. On that premise, I will argue that work based learning is not yet another passing educational fad but will become a central feature of higher education.

### The Educational Imperative

Perhaps the major challenge for higher education in the late 1990s is how it understands, approaches and achieves lifelong learning. Its well developed academic disciplines appear to be ill-equipped for this purpose because lifelong learning for individuals and organisations cannot be structured solely on these lines. Lifelong learning requires interdisciplinarity which itself is qualitatively different from current attempts at multi-disciplinarity.[1]

Work based learning provides a way forward because actual work situations are necessarily interdisciplinary even when led by a major discipline area. The test of

[1] Modularity and credit accumulation and transfer schemes while promoting choice and flexibility could be an obstacle to the interrogative nature of interdisciplinarity unless the programmes they construct have this clear intention and appropriate learning and assessment strategies. Research methods and projects could be useful instruments for this purpose.

work based learning, however, is not simply if it can combine elements from various disciplines but if in its own right it exhibits the intellectual characteristics of higher education. Clearly it demands and celebrates the development of a range of high level skills and expertise but does it wed these with critical reasoning and intelligent scepticism?

Costley (1996), in examining differences between traditional academic and work based learning approaches to argument in higher education, thinks that it does.

> Traditional rationalizations of argument are rooted in a philosophy which concerns what it is to know but not what it is to do. The focus is on logic, rationality and reason around knowledge which claims a universal validity. Science in the industrial age found this model good but it has since been deconstructed because traditional models of argument are not easily translatable in many situations and are not always applicable to present day work and life. Argument, in work based studies serves to apply relevant knowledge to experience....In work based studies, argument is an instrument, which has a functional role because, in a work based studies project, there is a final product. The most effective means of arriving at the product is by using argument as a vehicle to take the whole context of a situation (including expert opinion and common sense matters) into account. Argument is used to persuade significant interested parties to act in specific ways to achieve valued objectives. Argument is used therefore to change and transform and it has a 'fitness for purpose'.

Our work at the National Centre for Work Based Learning Partnerships (NCWBLP) is predicated on the proposition that work based learning does interface focused (expert) intelligence and intelligent scepticism. (Portwood, 1996) Early evidence is that employers and individuals warm to this approach primarily because it opens up questions, clarifies options and enables a more creative and rigorous undertaking of

projects. Our experience shows that employers appreciate the research orientation of work based learning particularly as this is of an "R&D" character. Work based learning has a unique opportunity to explore the interface of research and teaching because of this feature.

Evidence elsewhere such as the work on cognitive abilities in work based learning at the University of North London is equally encouraging. (Bryan and Assiter, 1994) The newly formed national work based learning network within the Universities Association for Continuing Education is giving high priority to philosophical debate on this issue. The Higher Education Quality Council has observed that work based learning is challenging current concepts of graduateness and the DfEE has noted its role in lifelong learning. (DfEE, 1996) But while all these signs are promising, the jury is out. Protagonists of work based learning have yet to prove their case, but at least they are already going beyond allied developments in academic credit systems and assessment of prior learning which rely heavily on assertions about the value of learning from all sources. The strength of the educational case for work based learning lies in its focus on work which is a fundamental human characteristic and therefore learning from work (good and bad) must affect the human condition and human enterprises.

**The Economic Imperative**

Lifelong learning is currently highly in favour in political, business and commercial circles because of its perceived economic benefits. A competitive environment demands not only initial competence but continuing up-dating and up-grading of skills, specifically in technology but more broadly in managing personal and organisational change.[2]

[2] Unquestionably this was the primary objective of the 30 Work Based Learning projects funded by the Employment Department 1991-96 but this is a highly complex issue.

Work based learning is challenged, therefore, to demonstrate that it performs these roles and in so doing pays its way for all the parties concerned. The chief criticism against it at the moment in academic circles is that it doesn't, primarily because it is seen to be labour intensive. On the other hand, major companies such as Ford Motor Co are presenting a "bottom line" argument for training and particularly work based learning partnerships with universities. (Mortimer, 1994)

The key lies in whether or not work based learning capitalises on all learning. This involves all sources, systems and sites of learning. At root the issue is integration of work based learning into the academic programme even though it takes place in the work situation. At Middlesex University we have changed academic regulations to make work based learning part of the academic fabric and at the same time administer and quality assure work based learning programmes through mainline mechanisms and systems. (Portwood and Garnett, 1995)

A similar problem confronts employers if work based learning is to be cost effective. Of course, they are enthusiastic that workers are not being taken away from the workplace and that work activities are being used as crucial learning opportunities and resources but cost-effectiveness is only fully achieved when work based learning becomes integral to and shapes their staff development and appraisal systems. A joint initiative between Bovis Construction, Middlesex University and a private consultant points the way in that the specific management competencies developed by Bovis are the centrepiece of a major staff development programme. The joint design, delivery and assessment of the programme is an example of the notion of equitable partnership.

In the end, the test of economic benefit lies in how far the customisation of the work based learning programme meets the personal and career interests of the individual in the context of the organisation's objectives while maintaining academic standards. Specific examples are emerging from across the United Kingdom from Glasgow Caledonian and Strathclyde Universities' developments in social work, to Portsmouth University's Partnership Programme, to Anglia Polytechnic University's work with

Ford[3] and Leicester University's postgraduate initiatives in scientific areas. Currently the emphasis is on management but increasingly other sectors are being involved particularly with links being forged between further education colleges and universities.

Undoubtedly the thorniest issue confronting higher education at present is funding. The question is "Who pays?" Work based learning is indicating one solution at least to the continuing education aspect of the problem.[4] Its future will become assured if it can play a more prominent part in initial education as well. As things stand conclusions about cost benefit are premature but there are some promising signs.

**The Social Imperative**

Perhaps the severest test of educational initiatives lies in whether or not they have a radical agenda. Are they simply new means of maintaining the status quo? What does work based learning offer unemployed and socially disadvantaged people? Certainly several initiatives have been undertaken with voluntary groups (e.g. Middlesex University and Age Concern) and specifically with trades unions (e.g. Sheffield Hallam University with Unison) but this is scarcely a radical movement.

The question is whether work based learning promotes social mobility and improves life chances for the non-privileged. Its emphasis on capitalisation of learning and customisation of programmes clearly offers new prospects for some individuals but the question "who pays?" is a stumbling block. Government policies and provisions are plainly crucial and the new UACE national WBL network is making political lobbying one of its priorities. It will need to combine economic and social objectives in that activity. Perhaps it can take a leaf out of the South African book where work based

[3] These and other cases are reported in Portwood, D. and Costley, C. (1996), op. cit.
[4] Not least because work based learning has exposed and is beginning to engage a market for part-time post-graduate work.

learning is being seen as vital to the reconstruction programme. The fact, however, is that work based learning in the UK has scarcely begun to address the social issue and cannot assure its future if it doesn't.

**Institutional Models**

Work based learning through its partnership approach is plainly responding to educational, economic and social imperatives. For higher education, its future will depend on what kind of institutional models are adopted. Currently the predominant form is the accreditation model which recognises uncertificated learning within organisations and by individuals and uses this as replacements for parts of its courses and programmes. Nearly all universities are at this stage.

However, relatively few are at the next stage where such accredited learning is used for developing customised programmes. Numerous instances exist of departmental and faculty initiatives in such fields as health, engineering, education and management but hardly any cross-institutional examples are available. Glasgow Caledonian University and the University of Kent have moved in this direction but the fullest adoption of the model is at Middlesex University. (Portwood and Garnett, 1995)

This is because Middlesex University through the NCWBLP has gone to the final stage of the total curriculum model of work based learning whereby it capitalises on learning resources and achievements both on and off-campus. The portfolio of companies and organisations it works with using accreditation, customised programmes and resources of the Middlesex academic programme spans private, public and voluntary sectors and all academic disciplines. Other universities, however, are hard on its heels, notably the University of Leeds which has the additional advantages of an extensive liberal arts resource in continuing education as well as highly developed relationships with trades unions.

And that is the secret of a viable future for work based learning in higher education. Is its curriculum comprehensive and its relationships with other stakeholders extensive? Early signs hold the promise that work based learning will become a central feature of higher education in the 21st century.

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## THE STATE OF CVE: THREE PROPOSITIONS FOR CHANGE

**by Ian Woodward**

### The Statistics

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) presently makes available £14.9 million per annum to support the development of Continuing Vocational Education (CVE), a figure which scarcely compares favourably with their expenditure on research or on "academic" teaching. Moreover, CVE is expected to become self-financing, a condition which does not apply, at least overtly and directly, to either academic teaching or to research. On this evidence, CVE would appear very much the poor relation of the publicly funded higher education system, and therefore it could be assumed that, at a national level, it is considered a marginal activity. However, a broader view suggests that CVE has a much greater significance than the HEFCE's targeted expenditure might suggest:

- the Higher Education Statistics Agency reports over a million registrations on university short courses in 1994/95, and from 1994 to 1995 provisional growth figures of 9% (to 187,000) for part-time enrolments on award bearing courses by students aged over 25[1] . Part-time mature students now constitute 30% of total enrolments in higher education, and whilst it is an assumption that a significant proportion of these students will be concerned with improving occupational performance and/or career prospects, it is perhaps a reasonable assumption to

[1] Source: HESA. Registrations by mature students on part-time postgraduate courses are now over double those for full-time provision. At undergraduate level, mature student enrolment on degree courses is split roughly 50/50 between full-time and part-time modes, and shows zero growth from 1994 to 1995. Registrations for sub-degree study show an almost 700% increase in part-time mode, though this is almost certainly a misleading figure since until 1993 the returns in this category showed a small annual decline (source: THESIS on-line service). This sudden sharp increase in sub-degree study, against the longer term trend, is almost certainly due to the mainstreaming of adult education in the ex-UFC universities and the inclusion for the first time of these students in the 1995 institutional returns to HESA.

make. The pattern of growth in part-time postgraduate provision is perhaps particularly important in this regard.

- in the UK, CVE for those in professional, managerial and technical occupations is the fastest growth area. (Employment Department Group, 1996) These are precisely the areas which are most suited to provision by universities, and therefore continued growth can be anticipated.

- the European Commission White Paper (1995) indicates that UK universities have a 10% share of the CVE market, the highest market share in Europe.

CVE is, therefore, a growth market, in which UK universities compare favourably with their European counterparts, and have the potential to capture a larger market share. It also appears to offer a high rate of return on public investment since non-award-bearing provision is intended to be, or to become, self-financing, and the level of Funding Council support for part-time study is lower than for the full-time mode. It is perhaps hard to escape the conclusion that CVE offers exceptional value for fairly modest amounts of public funding.

It is not unreasonable to expect that a growth market, such as CVE, would be subject to financial monitoring at national level. However, it is almost impossible to discern with anything approaching real accuracy whether there is a growth in revenue commensurate with the rising demand curve. The Harris report on postgraduate education though noting its importance for lifelong learning, was unable to identify meaningful data on revenue at a national level. (HEFCE, 1996) Their research did, however, discover marked variations in the (self-financing) fee levels set by different institutions:

> a range of £4,700-£11,860 for pgt classroom subjects, and £5,000-£12,900 for laboratory subjects; a range of £3,300-£11,000 and £4,300-£15,500 for pgr students; and a range of £5,000-£13,500 for MBAs.

This might suggest either market differentiation, or different approaches to costing and hence pricing "self-financing" degrees. Whatever the cause, the report contained the firm recommendation that fee levels should rise to ensure that provision was genuinely self-financing. It is a matter for speculation whether or not this recommendation could also be applied to non-award-bearing provision.

If it is difficult at national level to establish the financial health of (supposedly) self-financing provision leading to a qualification, the practice of including revenue from non-award-bearing provision in the global return for fee income renders it impossible to identify the contribution made by the one million plus registrations on short courses. In short, on a national basis the revenue attributable to CVE is unknown, and at present unknowable.

Does the absence of reliable data for CVE matter? Chivers and Nixon (1995) consider that collection of such data could be detrimental, allowing institutions to compare the financial benefits of CVE with those accruing from other activities and perhaps then concluding that institutional support for CVE should be withdrawn. However, since the publication of their article, universities have been faced with the further sharp drop in revenue announced in the 1995 budget. Inevitably, this will mean making stark choices about priorities in the coming years, and the absence of reliable data may in itself create doubt about the financial worth of the activity. In contrast, data on contract research in the former UFC institutions can be readily identified and shows a steady ten-year increase in earnings from non-governmental sources, rising from £200 million in 1982-83, to almost £700 million in 1993-94, at which point research grants and contracts comprised some 50% of all non-UFC revenue.[2] Consequently, institutions faced with choices on priorities may decide to emphasise areas such as contract research, where there is clearer evidence of financial benefit, to the detriment of CVE.

[2] Source: THESIS On-Line Service

Secondly, there is the question of continued support for CVE from public funds. Whilst this has never been substantial, it has contributed to innovation in CVE delivery, to the development and maintenance of both award and non-award bearing provision. It cannot help the case for further investment if at a national level it is impossible to show to what extent "self-financing" CVE provision is genuinely contributing to the financial health of the sector.

**Future Trends**

Measuring growth and counting revenue are not the only indices of worth. The market challenge of CVE – to develop services which are valued as an investment by mature learners – has led to considerable innovation and variety. In scope, CVE programmes now offer a continuum of opportunities to:

- learn a discrete skill, such as proficiency in the use of a particular software programme (c.f. *training*)

- maintain vocational competences to keep pace with changing technological, social and economic demands (c.f. *updating*)

- acquire completely new competences to maintain employability in the face of changing labour market requirements (c.f. *reskilling* or *conversion*) and

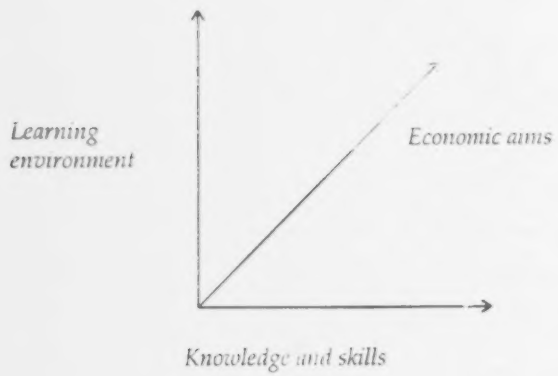
- gain enhanced capabilities for career progression (c.f. *development* or *upskilling*).

But it is the learning methodologies now associated with CVE, rather than the aims, which are proving most innovatory. The application of multi-media technologies, innovations in the use of workplace enquiry and more broadly of work based learning, and the introduction of systems for accreditation of prior (experiential) learning have


72

extended both the range and diversity of products and services, and generated fundamental qualitative changes to patterns of teaching and learning.

If the present and past of CVE have been innovatory, the potential for future innovation may be even more fundamental. The introduction of programmes of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) by the professional institutions, and interest from employers in the idea of the learning organisation, are set to create further opportunities for radical change in university CVE provision through the establishment of partnerships involving joint decision making on curricula, recruitment, learning methodologies, and assessment. Inevitably, these developments are and will be seen in some quarters as a dilution of academic standards and rigour. The traditional pattern of learning at universities has been in a controlled environment, with aims extending only to acquisition of pre-determined knowledge and skills, and so in essence university based learning has been a linear one-dimensional process. Partnerships may herald very significant changes to this pattern, with variables in the learning environment, negotiation and re-negotiation rather than dictation of the knowledge and skills to be acquired, and economic aims such as the contribution to organisation development, career progression, and employability firmly taken into consideration. In this scenario, CVE will become multi-dimensional, with a need to measure and plot the position of learners along three axes:



These changes would constitute a fairly radical shift, not only in the decision making systems which govern higher education, but also in the culture and values which universities possess. There needs to be an acknowledgement that the formal education system does not have a monopoly on learning, and a reconceptualisation of the role of university CVE from a concern with teaching and learning, to a facilitator of partnerships concerned with the creation of opportunities for the workforce to acquire and apply knowledge for economic benefit.

**Promoting CVE**

Linguistics may seem to be an unlikely inclusion in a discussion paper on CVE. However, analysing the meaning assigned to the term CVE by different interest groups suggests that "CVE" as a label for the activity could produce detrimental side-effects. By way of illustration of the confusion which can arise when individuals assign different meanings to the term CVE, consider the following purple passage taken from a recent interview with a newly appointed Pro Vice-Chancellor:

*Self (with pride):* There were over 11,000 registrations on last year's CVE programme.

*PVC (with disdain):* I don't think we should be doing CVE at all at this University.

The root cause of this misunderstanding was not one of disagreement about institutional strengths and mission. On the one hand, there was a view that CVE encompasses only acquisition of discrete work tasks: the *can do* definition. This was felt by the PVC to be an inappropriate activity for a university. In contrast, the alternative conception saw CVE as a continuum from practical skills acquisition through to development of high level conceptual and analytical competences, and the

capability continuously to refresh these competences through reflective practice: the *process* definition. In short, we were talking about two different things. (Once the differences in assigned meaning had been settled, there was, of course, complete harmony of opinion that the university should engage enthusiastically in CVE.)

The debate which has surrounded National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) provides a further example of the disagreements over the scope of vocational education. The initial restriction of NVQ assessment to observation of practical skills being applied in the work situation was heavily criticised by Smithers (1993). An interpretation of vocational to mean only "can do" in a specific situation was inadequate; underpinning knowledge and process skills were essential for transference from situation to situation. More recently, in the context of university provision, Yeo (1996) has challenged the distinction between continuing academic and vocational education as artificial with little meaning in practice and serving only to downgrade learning relevant to employment.

Undoubtedly there is a tradition in Britain, as in other European countries, of assigning a lower status to vocational as compared with academic or professional education. It is noticeable that the professions have not adopted the acronym CVE to describe their continuing education programmes. The Engineering Institutions employ Continuing Professional Development (CPD), the equivalent in medicine is Postgraduate or Continuing Medical Education (CME), and in accountancy the preferred option is Continuing Professional Education (CPE). The implication is that the domain of continuing *vocational* education is reserved for occupations which do not enjoy professional status. There is clearly an issue of the status and image associated with the term "vocational".

If there is confusion over the meaning of "CVE", and a suspicion that its status may be of lower value than continuing academic or professional education, then it is the CVE community within universities which is at fault. If, despite growth in demand and an enviable record in innovation, the image is still one of a second class activity then we

must consider means of improving the status. A change of label may not solve the problem, but it might be a valuable first step.

**Three Propositions for Change**

There is evidence of a growth market for CVE, in which in volume terms UK universities compare favourably with our European counterparts. However, to date, growth in CVE provision cannot be shown to have contributed to the overall financial health of the sector.

The first proposition for change is therefore that *both HESA and the Funding Councils should seek to identify more accurately the participation rate and revenue which is attributable to CVE. This will allow the development of effective policy options at both national and institutional levels.*

The second proposition concerns innovation. The development of partnerships with other agencies now offers a very significant potential for radical change, but one which needs stimulation and co-ordination at national level. *The review of higher education by the Dearing Committee presents a major opportunity to influence future policy direction to stimulate innovation and to foment partnerships with employers and professional and industry associations.*

The third proposition concerns image. On two counts, the descriptor "vocational" can cause problems:

- it conjures an image of a low status activity; and
- it can be understood as referring only to "can do" practical skills, excluding the development of the process skills essential to high level conceptual and analytic abilities.

*As a first step, UACE should consider the use of a different label for the activity – perhaps as in Scotland a change to CPD? Whilst this will not in itself provide a solution to the image of the activity, it may serve to place the issue on the agenda.*

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## ACCESS AND EQUITY

**by Terri Kelly**

This paper does not only address the Access course movement but takes "access" to mean all forms of access to higher education for older learners with different (from school-leaving-age, traditionally qualified entrants) backgrounds, qualifications and expectations. The term "equity" is taken to mean attempts to provide fair and equal treatment, experience and opportunities.

> It is important to capture the momentum achieved by the educational system in improving access, increasing flexibility and meeting diverse, economic and social needs. Secondly we have to identify gaps, partial achievement, and constraints inhibiting progress towards the vision of the 'learning society'. (Watson, 1996)

This paper attempts to address the following assertions and questions:

- improvements have been made in access to and equity in HE - how have we moved forward?

- there are still some areas requiring particular attention: two particular areas have been selected for attention - the representation of minority ethnic groups and those from socio-economic classes IV and V;

- we are all sisters under the skin (that is, the former PCFC and UFC university continuing education practitioners) and we need to make more strenuous efforts to identify, acknowledge and exploit common ground if we are to make progress towards a more equal and flexible system;

- our attention could now be turned to exploring the possibility that as we "improve" opportunities for some learners we worsen the situation for those still outwith the system.

**Improvements**

What improvements have we made? The elevation of the word "access" into a proper noun, to describe a movement in education, must have occurred during the 1980s. Certainly the Access movement, rumbling subterraneously long before the eighties, emerged into full daylight in the late 80s. How has that movement affected HE? Have we now got accessible institutions? It is an interesting exercise to recall the analysis and recommendations of the (now disappeared) Unit for the Development of Adult Continuing Education (UDACE) as set out in its *Developing Access: The Discussion Paper* (note the definite article) of 1988. (UDACE, 1988) The proposed "framework for access" and essential indicators of an "accessible system" described in that paper always made good sense. We might ask ourselves, wherever we are in the HE sector, whether we can now use those descriptors for our own institutions? Are we satisfied, as practitioners, employees, colleagues - even learners - that the UDACE pieties have been adopted? Are we even satisfied that the UDACE recommendations have at least led to improvements? We might usefully also ask what evidence we can call on to supplement our own impressionistic and anecdotal responses in order to answer these questions. In calling on evidence we need to revisit the past, briefly.

Cynics believe that the Access movement only impinged upon the HE establishment because of the demographic trends that were scaring universities and polytechnics in the late eighties. We may need to make some effort now to recall that there was much discussion at that time of the impact upon HE of the forecast drop of one million in the 16-18 year-old population by the 1990s. In the early 90s, statistical information available through UCCA and PCAS showed there to be about 50,000 "failed" applications through the respective systems. "Failed," that is, in that these were

applications which failed to result in places being offered and/or taken up. The reasons for this level of "failure" were not clearly known: what did seem clear was that there was a demand upon HE that was not being met. That might have been clear to some before but what made a difference was that HE, in the late 80s and early 90s, was becoming alert to the benefits to the sector by making more effort to mop up that impressive demand. (A factor which we might easily overlook is that, at that time, the separate UCCA and PCAS systems meant that collating data for showing trends in HE was difficult and sometimes impossible - different data was collected in different ways - but we did know at that time that there was less than an average of 10% of mature students in the former UFC universities.) As a response to the worry about demography the great expansion of numbers in HE in the 90s was heralded by Government targets to expand participation so as to achieve a 1 in 3 participation rate of school-leavers by 2000.

Over the past six years we have seen some changes - some more apparent, perhaps, than real, in that the end of the binary divide in 1992 and the subsequent unification of national admissions and statistical agencies presents a picture of change which is often an effect of amalgamating previously separate numbers. We now have, though, over 1.5 million in HE overall (compare that with only 50,000 in 1938!). We have, we are told, achieved the target for participation: 18 year-olds now have a nearly 60% chance of going to university - now or later in their lives. (The participation rate was 1.2% in 1900 compared with an almost forgotten 6.5% in 1962.) Some commentators point out that this is an over-achieving of the target and more accidental than planned. (Smithers and Robinson, 1995) We now have relatively high numbers entering HE with an Access qualification. In 1994, so a July 1995 Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data report tells us, 6,677 men and 9,560 women - mostly in the 25-39 age bracket - gained places and had an Access course as their main qualification (69.5% of this total took their Access course in a College of FE). Women have now got almost 50% of places overall in HE and there is now 50.5% over 21 in HE overall (about 34% of which are on first full-time degrees 34%); and a staggering 94% of first year part-time students are over 21. (HESA, 1995) To add to these changes in student entry and

participation - most of which can look like improvements - we are told we can add increased participation by minority groups and some changes in the class origins of students in HE.

In parallel with these shifts and changes in student numbers and types we have had major curricula developments in HE. We have a majority of institutions now claiming a modular and credit-bearing structure; we have accreditation of prior learning (including experiential learning) offering access to HE and/or on-course mobility and flexibility; we have prolific developments in flexible learning materials and mode - from open and distance learning to work based learning - often assisted through developments in educational and communications technology. These developments - especially those associated with the concept of openness - are considered by many to be an illustration and embodiment of equal opportunities, of attempts to take the learning to where the educational beer does not currently get. (Naturally, there is a more cynical view of the purpose of developments in open and distance learning.) We have new vocational qualifications which can equip students for entry into HE - so many that it has been forecast that by the year 2000 most university students will have gained entry without "academic" qualifications. (Smithers and Robinson, 1995) There are far more opportunities for part-time study (and an increasing number of students studying in part-time mode). The growth in regionalism (see the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service - UCAS - Annual Report for 1993/94 for an analysis of the increasing trend for students to choose a university in their home region) will mean that more and more HEIs will respond to the needs of their local and regional populations and this, in turn, will promote more flexible and appropriate curricula. (UCAS, 1994)

If we believe our own press we can and do serve any learner of any kind whatever their need, wherever they are, and we serve them appropriately, fairly and equally.

We all know that this is not true and few of us do believe the rhetoric with which we decorate our prospectuses, publicity and press-releases. Of course, it is different in the world of adult and continuing education ....

**Remaining Challenges**

Clearly, to balance the statistical picture of changes in access and equity we need, as David Watson suggested, to identify the gaps and the areas where further improvement is needed. The "hurdles", which he says we need to clear before HE can play a full part in contributing to the lifelong learning vision, include: funding for both institutions and students; cultural resistance to new, flexible curricula; and the educational dividend of higher skills in an expanded HE system at a time of economic recession. (Watson, 1996) There is scope for adding to those three very big factors which are inhibiting improvements. There is certainly scope for demonstrating other areas for improvement. Taking just two categories of students - those from the lower socio-economic classes and those from minority ethnic groups - we confront a major gap and an obvious area for continuing education practitioners to address.

Despite the changes in class origin of students in HE, for instance, there is still only a very low percentage of social classes IV and V being admitted. There are particular problems in capturing information on this topic: "There is no simple way to draw a conclusive picture on this subject, especially as no relevant national data on students over 21 years of age exists", says a Higher Education Funding Council report which mainly addresses only the socio-economic make-up of the full-time undergraduate student population. (HEFCE 1996, p. 23) Even statistical information gathered by UCAS on the specifics of Access and Foundation courses reveals that 20.9% of applicants from those courses do not (unsurprisingly) specify their social class. Of the groups, however, gaining acceptance onto HE courses from Access and Foundation courses socio-economic class II represented the largest group of those accepted and class V represents the smallest group. Although classes III to V represents a higher

proportion of the accepted Access/Foundation applicants than they do of the total accepted population for HE overall. "Access/Foundation students from social class V are still very poorly represented in HE, despite the attempts of Access/Foundation programmes to target them." (UCAS 1996, p.7) What is reasonably clear is that people from less advantaged social classes often enter HE later in life so that those in HE who are concerned with providing for older students may be helping to provide (as the HEFCE report blandly puts it) "a valuable social service to the nation by increasing the opportunities for 'second chancers' to enter HE." (HEFCE 1996, p.23) The HEFCE Advisory Group's report points out that success in increasing participation for these groups "may not depend solely on the activity of the HE sector: action is required at an earlier stage of the educational process" but this undoubtedly true observation may be taken as a licence to abdicate responsibility. (HEFCE 1996, p.26) (Interestingly, Cliff Allan's summary of the Advisory Group's report for a recent Forum for the Advancement of Continuing Education Bulletin uses a significantly modified form of words to express this question of responsibility for the representation of social groups II to V. Rather than "not depend[ing] solely on HE activity" Allan points out that the question "may not be one which the HE sector can address" [FACE, 1996].)

The concession that further improvement needs to be made for a more equitable representation of social classes in HE is balanced by some tendency to complacency when the participation of minority ethnic groups is addressed by bodies such as HEFCE, HESA and UCAS. We tend to hear now that such groups are "well represented" in HE. (Cliff Allan, FACE Bulletin and Brian Fender, UACE Annual Conference 1996) We do know that there have been improvements but we also know that there is unequal distribution and under-representation of some groups. Because of the changes in gathering data at the point of application we now have statistical information relating to the entry of minority ethnic groups, especially those entering with Access and Foundation qualifications. We know, for instance, that 4.3% of all Asian home applications, as compared to 5.8% of all White and 19.1% of all Black (the categories are those used by UCAS) home applicants, have Access or Foundation qualifications. We know that 18.6% of Black accepted applicants have Access or

Foundation qualifications and we therefore know that these entry qualifications are more popular for Black students than for any other home applicant from any other ethnic group. There is a bigger proportion of home applicants from minority ethnic groups, overall, with an Access or Foundation qualification, than the proportion of such groups as a whole gaining acceptance onto HE places with other, traditional qualifications. (UCAS 1996, p.6) Nevertheless, we also know that we have under-representation of young black Caribbean men and also of women from Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups. We also know that 60% of all minority ethnic students are in the post-1992 universities which shows an imbalance across the sector. Above all, we know that such students encounter problems when entering the labour market and that "the achievements and destinations of non-traditional students and ethnic minority graduates in particular require further examination." (HEFCE 1996, pp. 16-19)

**Common Ground**

Those in HE, especially those involved in adult and continuing education, know that despite changes in student population and changes in the curricula and the structures of HE, there is a long way to go before we can be described as having an equitable and accessible system. Yet, on one interpretation, the mainstreaming of continuing education means that the ideologies of adult and continuing education now have an institution-wide forum in the pre-1992 universities and we know that they have always been integral to the central purpose of post-1992 universities. Whatever the shades of difference between the former UFC and PCFC universities, between liberal and extra-mural provision for adults as a discrete area and "whole institution" goals of access and flexibility, there are essentially similar motives which unite the traditions. Departmental or institution-wide, the aim for accessible, equitable and flexible provision in order to effect social, economic and cultural improvements has been, and still is, shared. If we are to work together, in the relatively new unified sector, to address the gaps in progress and areas for improvement, then we need to first address where we can find common ground between the continuing education practitioners

who conceive of their role as being institution-wide and for all learners, and practitioners who see their role as belonging to a discrete discipline and for (loosely defined) adults. If we don't find common ground then we perpetuate difference, lose opportunities to learn from each other, and impede progress towards achieving accessible and equitable provision.

The current national and international theme (expressed in a recent battery of campaigns, logos and slogans) of lifelong learning is hardly new but the present preoccupation and fashionableness of the theme means it is being explored as if it were. There are a number of consequences of the current exploration. One is to highlight the semantic blurriness surrounding the interpretation of continuing education. Another is the focus on continuing to learn so as to supply the labour market with necessary skills and work towards economic regeneration and competitiveness (demonstrated in the Department for Education and Employment, Lifetime Learning consultative document, [DfEE,1995]). Yet another consequence (almost in direct contradiction to a vocational and economic emphasis in lifelong learning) is the restoration of the value in learning for learning's sake and learning beyond and outside the world of work. Through the lifelong learning theme we seem, on the one hand, to be presented with a powerful vehicle for working towards flexible, accessible and equitable provision but, on the other hand, be presented with yet another development which makes us contemplate the different constructions within university continuing education approaches. We need, rather, to find ways to contemplate the similarities. Perhaps one way is to assert that issues relating to access and accessibility are simply focused on the question of who gets educational opportunities and who does not. It is merely the precise educational opportunity that may differ in nature and context (it may not be, for instance a degree-orientated higher education opportunity) but the fundamental principle should offer a basis for agreement. Adult liberal education, in the non-accredited, extra-mural tradition, offers learning opportunities which are free from directed (to HE) purpose but (ideally) wholly focused upon disinterested learning-for-the-pleasure-of-learning.

Access courses, however, represent a form of social engineering. (Brennan 1989, p.57) Access courses are radical in intention in that they see education as a means by which whole social groups can improve their social, economic and political positions; and they are also radical in that they are based upon a rejection of the brand of failure (and criteria for such) imposed by the conventional education system upon Access course candidates. However, those within the Access course movement may be seen as working in a long-established tradition, sharing many of the beliefs and practices of adult liberal education. The adult education tradition of participatory learning for its own sake and not for credit does not directly contradict Brennan's claim even though it cannot be seen as actively and strategically striving to have adults gain access to the conventional credentials (and the associated experience) of HE. Adult education (however that is expressed) may in itself be seen as expressing an ideology of needs, access and provision and as always having an essential concern with issues of access. There is common ground and it is high time, now that the pain and difficulties of mainstreaming "ex-responsible body" continuing education are diminishing, that the common ground is exploited, and UACE can and should be addressing this.

**Winners and Losers**

Finally, assuming UACE is providing the glue to help us, in our different traditions, to work together, we may then turn to address the most worrying question which all the actual and potential changes discussed above presents. That question would be: has mature student participation actually resulted in "increasing inequalities amongst different sections of the population rather than making for a decrease in such differences"? (CERI 1987, p.38) As we work collectively towards flexibility of provision and towards having an accessible and flexible system we should simultaneously guard against merely perpetuating the values and tendencies of the *status quo* in HE. Accreditation of adult and continuing education courses will bring benefits and opportunities to some who are currently not well served but it also, together with expansion of numbers in HE, may expedite credentialist inflation. That

is, an increasingly credentialist society demands qualifications, despite the doubtful economic rewards for them in the labour market, and the demands drive learners, in turn, to seek credentials rather than the appropriate learning experience. Yet again, as a more flexible and accessible system opens opportunities to learners who were previously excluded, other groups are left behind and the gulf between those in and those outwith the system widens so that "access becomes an arena of status struggle between social groups". (Halsey, 1993) Furthermore, we might concede some truth in Halsey's claim that access is "socially controlled by institutional differentiation." We still see, in many HEIs, salted away into institutional and individual attitude and mind-set, a usually unarticulated but powerfully held belief that students from different, untraditional backgrounds are less viable, not so good, as "standard" students. These embedded attitudes are fostered by the institutional selfish gene which puts competitive survival first: "... in the main the status of institutions is linked to their reputation with young students, and an institutional profile which demonstrates a high proportion of adults in undergraduate programmes is often associated with lower status". (Davies, 1995) The flurry of concern about standards (centring upon Foundation courses) which we saw in 1995/96 demonstrates this tendency towards differentiation, as does the fear that the FE sector might erode the quality and standards of university-provided HE simply by offering it. (There is, in fact, a current overflow of HE into FE - 11.2% of English and Welsh HE students are now taught in FE colleges. We should worry less about that, perhaps, but rather be alert to the overflow of HE into the workplace and the control of that provision being with employers rather than HEIs. Increasingly flexible, increasingly dispersed provision can spell a diminution in the power, status and control of HEIs. That, of course, may be no bad thing.)

The immensely worrying possibility that continuing education practitioners are, inadvertently, working towards further exclusion for some groups, coupled with the still powerful forces of embedded, conventional attitudes, represents the most pressing cause for reflection, research and collaborative action. The imminent HEFCE research into the experience of non-traditional students in HE (representing a change in focus from recruitment and admissions) is overdue but it is also insufficient. Research into

the aspirations and experience of those still - and likely to continue to be - outwith HE is crucially important and needed now.

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# MAKING FRIENDS AND INFLUENCING PEOPLE

## THE POLITICAL PARTIES

**by Richard Taylor**

Continuing Education (CE), broadly defined, has become an important area for the main political parties. The rapid expansion of all post-compulsory education and training, the increasing numbers of part-time, locally based and mature students in FE and HE, and above all the perceived needs of the economy (and to a lesser extent the wider society) for more education and training - have all led to CE being centre stage for the political parties, as it has become for the FE and HE sectors.

This is abundantly clear from the policy statements of the parties. (I do not intend here to comment in any detail on these policy statements, as UACE has already issued detailed responses, which are publicly available.)

This marks, of course, a profound change. For years adult and continuing education was seen as a significant, worthwhile but essentially ancillary activity. Whether in the context of LEA adult education, or the WEA and extramural tradition, adult and continuing education was seen predominantly as either a fairly low level, dilettante activity or as deficit provision, enabling at least some of those who had had unsatisfactory educational experiences at school to gain some benefit from education. (There were exceptions, of course. In the University sector the whole social purpose, socialist formation of the WEA and liberal adult education tradition exercised a profound, two-way influence on the Labour Movement, and the WEA and University CE development.)

The situation is now transformed. Although there are some differences in emphasis and orientation in the two main political parties (discussed below), in all essentials their perspectives on CE are very similar. To begin with there is an overwhelming concentration upon training and vocationalism. Part of the Thatcherite legacy has been

to stress far more than previously the primary role of vocationalism in the education system as a whole, and the post-compulsory education sector in particular. The neo-utilitarian view of education as being essentially about equipping people with marketable skills has become predominant. Equally important has been the increasing emphasis upon the needs of the economy for a rapid increase in skilled "technician grade" employees. CE is seen as a crucial element in this process, as the NETTS objectives indicate. The education and training of adult employees to enable adaptation to rapidly changing economic and social circumstances is a key objective. The ending of the binary division and the increasing emphases in HE generally upon mature entry and part-time modes of study accelerated this trend.

Secondly, both the major political parties are concerned with squaring a very difficult circle: rapid expansion of HE numbers, at minimal additional cost to the public purse, and the maintenance of high quality. CE again has a key role to play here. If more students can be home or work based and local, and can study part-time whilst retaining important work or social roles, then costs will be radically reduced. Moreover, through the development of continuing vocational education, work based learning and related activities both employers and individuals will increasingly pay full or "near market" costs for their learning.

Related to both these factors is the complex of issues concerning curriculum and mode of study. The political parties have encouraged the development of curriculum, and learning approaches, more suited to the "world of work" - more applied and inter-disciplinary, more practice and professionally related, and more concerned with directly economic relevance.

All this is familiar enough. For the CE community, however, there are problems with the perspectives and policy orientation of the political parties. The remainder of this paper attempts, first, to outline these problems, then to note the difference between the parties in this context, and finally to suggest some *real politik* areas for discussion.

The first problem area is in a sense one of perceptions. Whilst to those working in university CE, whether in the former UFC or former PCFC universities, the focus and definition of CE is reasonably clear, to the political parties the changes and objectives noted earlier are systemic and it is hard for CE to define for itself a precise role. (The point becomes clear if one compares the current position of CE with the very different and well-understood ethos of university liberal adult education and workers' education from the 1920s onwards.) This is of course a fundamental issue for CE within the *university* context, as well as the political. Paradoxically, just as CE has become such a central part of university activity, so it is in danger of losing its identity and even its specific *raison d'être*. A key task for UACE, therefore, is to establish credibility and focus for CE with the political parties and to identify in specific, simple terms the ways in which CE can act as the catalyst for achieving the changes that the parties desire.

Significantly, NIACE has achieved a higher profile and presence in recent years with the parties, and has firmly established adult continuing education as an area of policy concern. This is in part due to the highly effective work of Alan Tuckett and other NIACE officers in working with the political parties (*vide* the success of Adult Learners Week, and particularly the involvement in ALW of the ministerial members of both the Conservative and Labour parties). But it also reflects the striking emphasis within the educational policies and perspectives of the parties on the *non-university* sector. It is clear that, in the education sector as a whole, nursery and pre-school education is the first priority and a plethora of issues about school education the second. In the post-compulsory sector, which is equally clearly the third priority, the major concern is with FE, and the pre-eminent need for vocational education and training for the 16-19 year old age group. In the post-compulsory sector, therefore, NIACE, which represents the *whole* range of adult continuing education, has had a key role to play. All this is not to say that university CE is of no interest to the parties - far from it, as can be seen from the responses we had from UACE meetings with Eric Forth, Bryan Davies and Don Foster - but it does indicate that we have a lot of political work to do (in UACE and elsewhere) to ensure that university CE perspectives and priorities are properly recognised.

Another problem area concerns the purposes of CE as we in the field perceive them in contrast to the perceptions of the parties. This is a large area of discussion, but the central, general point is that CE professionals see our work as a multi-faceted and wide ranging spectrum with equal weight being given to liberal education for individual development, social purpose education *et al*, as well as to vocational education; whereas the political parties tend to concentrate almost exclusively on the latter. Of course, there are rhetorical commitments to other facets of CE - but these remain largely at the level of rhetoric.

This is an appropriate point at which to note briefly the differences between the parties in the context of university CE. There is clearly agreement not only on the priority to be accorded to vocational education but also on a number of other CE areas: credit accumulation and transfer, the growth of locally based and part-time students, guidance, and (dependent upon Dearing) the introduction of a more equitable funding system. There are though, two important areas of difference. The Labour Party places greater emphasis upon regional devolution and collaboration across the post-compulsory sector, both statutory and voluntary; and the Labour Party, even in its Blairite form, has a potential commitment to developing citizenship education.

The extent of the likely devolution if a Labour Government takes office is difficult to determine. Clearly, Labour will wish to restore at least some power and autonomy to LEAs; also, Labour is certain to give priority to FE in any Regional Council structure, in part because of the priority noted earlier for 16-19 vocational education. Universities would of course be an important element in this development, as Bryan Davies made clear to us when we met to discuss Labour's attitude to CE, but it was equally clear that HE would not be the focus of the structure. Moreover, there are difficult issues of the balance between regional structures and institutional autonomy. Whilst these apply to FE (not least in the context of the relationship between FE Colleges and the Further Education Funding Council), these issues are far more serious and deep-rooted in the university sector. Whether university involvement in such

structures should be confined to CE related areas or should be much broader is a key strategic issue on which UACE could and should have some influence.

Developing one or more initiatives on citizenship education is equally problematic. This could be a means of rearticulating the social purpose ethos and provision of CE. But, again as Bryan Davies made clear, this will not be easy to accomplish. A clear rationale, with an employment related emphasis, and spanning FE and the voluntary sector as well as HE, is essential. Substantial funding - or even *any* funding - will be difficult to come by. The development of this rationale, maybe in co-operation with NIACE, and in liaison with the Labour Party, could be a strategic priority for UACE over the next year or so.

In summary, what issues should UACE concentrate upon in the lead-up to the Election and in the early days of the next Government? Perhaps the issues fall into two categories: those to do with "positioning" CE, and those to do with substantive projects or development areas.

As far as "positioning" is concerned:

- with NIACE, should UACE produce a policy statement specifying how CE can act as a catalyst across the whole post-compulsory sector for attaining the objectives the parties have outlined?

- should UACE be developing policy in areas of key concern to the parties, or is this best left on one side to await further developments like the possibility of regional structures emerging and the possible merger of the FE and HE Funding Councils?

As far as substantive issues or projects are concerned, which of the following (if any) should be given priority by UACE in terms of proposals for the next Government?

- guidance
- funding structures for CE (both students and particular types of provision)
- citizenship education and/or community education
- CVE and WBL initiatives.

Finally, for UACE, a key strategic issue - which relates to relations with the political parties but to much else besides - is whether the organisation should see itself primarily as a catalyst for transforming the HE system to a "lifelong learning" ethos and structure; or whether our primary role should continue to be to represent the collective interests of the "CE community" within HE. Or, maybe, the two objectives and roles are not incompatible?

## THE REGIONAL DIMENSION

**by Freda Tallantyre**

### Introduction

Many universities indicate in their mission statements that they believe they have a significant contribution to make to the region in which they are located, but what this means in practice can range from mere lip service to characterising almost everything they do.

In reality, universities belong to many communities. All continue to see themselves as part of a national market for recruitment of full-time students, even if the proportion of those drawn from the immediate region has been inexorably rising for many institutions over the last few years. The negative perspective upon this is that it represents a drift towards parochialism and potential dilution of standards, while a more positive perspective would be that it creates opportunities for all who can benefit from participation in higher education and also that raises quality in the region.

Simultaneously, universities regard themselves as part of an international community of research and advancement of knowledge within their various disciplines. Moreover, most now have considerable ambitions to participate in a global network of teaching at higher levels, by accepting ever increasing numbers of international students, by franchising programmes, by establishing new campuses or by engaging in other entrepreneurial activity overseas.

A third community in many cases is that of the profession, binding together academics and those in employment within the sectors they serve, in order to preserve their associated status and standards.

The interests of this range of communities can sometimes be in tension with one another, though there will also be ways in which they may be supported one by another. A university will be well advised to ask itself honestly what it expects to give and to get in making commitment to its region a genuine priority and the rest of this paper seeks to facilitate that reflection by focussing on four 'P's:

- purpose
- policy
- partners
- process.

**Purpose**

If one explores institutional drivers for regional involvement, one will inevitably find a full spectrum from intrinsic to extrinsic.

For many of us, the Robbins principle of education for all who can benefit, more recently recast in Christopher Ball's vision for lifelong learning that

> A society where the appetite for learning was as normal as breathing or drinking would provide for its satisfaction, opportunities for pre-school nursery learning, full-time initial learning and part-time post-initial or continuing learning would be available for all, like air or water

continues to motivate us to extend the facility of a higher education, once reserved for a social elite, out into our communities to those who might otherwise encounter many barriers. (Ball, 1990) The reality of their circumstances often requires flexibility in terms of admissions requirements and modes of delivery for ease of access.

At this and other levels, there is a recognition that every community contains a wealth of experience that can enrich our learning, and increasingly an awareness that higher education does not have a monopoly on advanced forms of knowledge and understanding. NIACE has argued that an adult higher education of the future will know no institutional boundaries.

By opening our doors locally and working in more flexible ways, we can generate not only complex transfers of experience, but also mutual benefits of a more pragmatic kind. The part-time mature student from the workplace turns out to be a valuable source of case study material or shadowing opportunities for full-time students. The voluntary organisation that needs some cheap or free consultancy or research can provide a source of valuable placements or projects for students.

More external pressures to give specific attention to the region derive from the National Targets for Education and Training, which tend to be translated into local performance indicators, with achievement driven from the TECs. The new Lifelong Learning Target 2, which aims that by the year 2000 - "30% of the work force to have a vocational, professional, management or academic qualification at NVQ Level 4 or above" - is proving to be one of the most challenging. Together with the new performance indicator to have a strategy for working with HE, it is encouraging TECs to pay more attention to higher level skills and ways of engaging with universities.

Regional pressures are matched in a number of ways at national level. Since the disappearance of the binary line, there has been concern about mission drift in a climate in which all indicators point to the need for increased emphasis upon Lifelong Learning. This focus underpins the terms of the Dearing Review of HE, suffuses the Labour Party's Manifesto for education, and accounts for the proposal by HEFCE to weight funding in future in favour of part-time and mature students from a regional context. Quality Audit will hold institutions accountable for fulfilling statements of commitment to their region, and Quality Assessment actively seeks evidence of feedback from external stakeholders like employers.

The relentless pressure on the unit of resource in HE is encouraging all universities to diversify their funding base, with respect to both research and teaching. The regional community is perceived as a source of manifold opportunities for contracts in areas such as applied research, consultancy, continuing professional development, training, joint enterprise, technology transfer, etc. The partnerships these create are increasingly critical in generating European funding for regional regeneration, and contribute to attracting further inward investment, with its concomitant further opportunities.

The arguments are, then, very cogent for playing a fuller part within the region, and it should not be underestimated how significant is the contribution of any university though, as Professor John Goddard observes:

> Few universities have undertaken a thorough going review of the extent and significance of their involvement across a broad front with the community and how this relates to the more traditional components in their mission. (Goddard, 1995)

In a recent study of the Local Impact of the University of Northumbria, it was established that a highly significant contribution was made to short-term benefits for the regional economy via:

- direct and indirect employment and expenditure by the university, its staff and students;
- staff external activities e.g. governors, advisory boards, directors, partners;
- student placements and project work as a resource;
- information provision to the wider community;
- cultural, social and environmental events and activities.

Longer term benefits arose from:

- the impact on the local stock of human capital;
- extending local educational aspirations and opportunities;
- local retention of graduates;
- the dynamic effect of research, consultancy and short course impacts;
- support for technology transfer;
- alumni support for the region, especially from overseas;
- attraction of professionals to the region. (Stone *et al*, 1996)

In the end, it is a case of enlightened self-interest, rather than altruism, that a university contributes to the general well-being of its region, since a high level of participation and performance in education and training, and a good base of skilled personnel, top-class facilities and expert support will attract inward investment, create a stronger economy and better environment and draw well qualified and enterprising people into a region in a spiral of improvement.

**Policy**

However, if it is worth considering institutional motives and objectives for involvement with the region, it is worth framing them within an institutional policy that is both strategic and flexible.

The personal and professional lives of the staff of a large organisation such as a university lead them naturally into a rich diversity of networks, and any audit of regionally-focussed activities is likely to unearth a rich resource of contacts upon which to build. There are two weaknesses inherent within these arrangements, as identified by Boyne, Foreman-Peck and Tallantyre, in that they tend to be *adhoc* and unstrategic activities, designed to achieve local and at times even personal, rather than

institutional goals, and that they are highly vulnerable to changes of personnel. (Boyne *et al.*, 1992)

It is useful to take a step back from the centres of activity in themselves, and at institutional level, or even in conjunction with key external partners, to establish a set of general aims, grounded in specific objectives and targets, tied to timescales.

The policy will need to be widely consulted upon in the framing so that it can be owned on approval, but once it is approved it can be used as part of the institutional planning process to help determine priorities at all levels. It also becomes a valuable statement to the external world to clarify the university's intentions, engender trust and mutual commitment and give a starting point for negotiation.

A proper management cycle can be put in place, with accountability for contributions at all levels, to:

- audit (and categorise existing activities under specific objectives);
- plan (priorities, innovations, consolidation, etc.);
- implement;
- monitor (performance against objectives, targets, timescales);
- review (in order to refine the specific details within the general aims).

In 1992, the University of Northumbria at Newcastle (UNN) devised its Regional Policy by just such a process, with four main planks:

- Aim 1

To promote vigorously and enhance the reputation of the University of Northumbria at Newcastle as being a leading contributor to regional development and prestige, by seeking strategic and wide representation upon the relevant range of regional bodies and encouraging there the concept of regional planning.

- Aim 2

To enhance the region's ability to perform competitively within European and world markets.

- Aim 3

To make a positive contribution towards improving the social, environmental and cultural profile of the region.

- Aim 4

To increase higher education participation rates for the North through collaborative initiatives to provide access, feeder, foundation, flexible and joint schemes.

**Partners**

Who constitutes one's partners will be determined largely by what aims and objectives are arrived at in the institutional policy, but many of them are predictable and may be extrapolated from an example like UNN.

Assuming that a university aims to be proactive and influential in shaping the policies and plans of the region, rather than merely responsive, it will wish to engage directly with the bodies considering such areas as economic investment, health, safety, environment, transport, communications and, of course, education and training. It will seek formal involvement, where it can, to endeavour to ensure that, where possible, specific proposals build in from the start plans for addressing implications for education and training needs and underpinning research and consultancy.

Such bodies are likely to include regional Government Departments, and in particular the new integrated Government Offices, the Local Authorities, TECs, Development Agencies and Corporations and Health Trusts. Many of these are constrained, of course, by national bodies and paymasters to filling in detail rather than drawing up the

plan; nor is it clear as yet whether a Labour Government would devolve significantly more power to regions, in the short term.

Most universities wish to develop quality relationships with employers, and particularly the significant ones in their region, at the very least in terms of supplying them with employable graduates, but more often for a whole flexible range of services that will diversify income sources. The major employers are usually a relatively easy target, with enlightened policies about staff development and training for a world class workforce, and personnel in place to manage this. Their representatives may well occupy places on a university's Board of Governors or Industrial Liaison Fora. Then again, the professions are readily engageable through regional branches of Professional Bodies, on which academics and employers sit side by side in a common interest. Much harder targets are the small and medium enterprises, though they can be reached through a medium like Chamber of Commerce, Business Links or Enterprise Agencies. A different but productive route is frequently provided by the Trade Unions.

For boosting rates of participation in HE and for finding alternative sources of quality students to avoid the hazards of clearing, universities are entering into increasingly complex and sometimes formal relationships with schools, colleges and providers or accreditors of adult and/or community education, such as Open College Networks or the WEA. Student finance in particular is adding to the pool of potential students who cannot consider operating from anything other than a local base, and providers are keen to establish reliable progression routes for them via foundation courses, compacts, franchises, Associate Colleges, and other such devices. These raise sensitive issues like quality assurance, exclusivity, quotas, etc., but if these can be managed, then the links frequently yield students who are better informed about and prepared for the programme they apply for and more committed to success than others exercising more hazardous and distant choices. Successful links will include good quality guidance and mutual staff and curriculum development activity, rather than merely promotional and recruitment activity.

Complementary allies in the participation arena are careers advisers, with whom time spent explaining university provision and requirements will have a multiplier effect, and training providers, especially now that bridges are being built between academic and vocational programmes.

Finally, in this competitive age one should not ignore the benefits in collaboration with other universities to meet regional needs most efficiently. This can be particularly beneficial where universities operate in complementary fields which together can provide external clients with a more cohesive package, or in marginal activities in which each university may be constrained about the amounts of business it can handle. In the North East, for example, the six universities collaborate in a consortium known as the Higher Education Support for Industry in the North (HESIN), which has been able to generate value-added projects for the provision of CPD, of technology transfer, of CATS provision, of reorientation post-redundancy, of integrated graduate development schemes and of support for small businesses.

**Process**

The nature of regional activity is such that the above groups of partners do not operate discretely, but in many combinations through interlocking networks for a variety of purposes. Relationships are rarely, therefore, of a simple bilateral nature. There are distinct benefits for a university in ensuring within its internal structures that the key institutional contacts for the various external groups operate in close proximity, or even in direct relationship one with another so that they can keep one another well informed about developments, and so that they can provide the most coherent set of services to external clients, preferably through a single entry point to the institution.

In the NIACE project exploring the relationships between HE and TECs, the concept of single entry points and key contacts is emerging as one of the most regular characteristics of success. (UACE, 1996) This is not a mechanism for control, but for

ease of access from outside and for co-ordination and dissemination of information within. The North East seminar which considered UACE project outcomes in June 1996 concluded further that the labels attached and resource dedicated to the services undertaking these functions would give visibility and important signals of value attached to partnership by a university in the external world.

A further consistent finding of the project in relation to partnership with key bodies is the importance of commitment at both senior and middle management level, with good horizontal and vertical communication lines. Influence can thus be applied at strategic level but feed directly into operational activity.

Genuine partnership has an opportunity cost in the investment of time to get to know well each other's organisation. There has to be a real pay off for each partner in achieving more together than each individually might be able to, but trust and credibility is often built by patiently supporting others in the achievement of their own objectives in the early stages, for example, by sitting on project steering committees or other fora. The relationship builds from sharing information and finding small services that each can perform for one another, based on individual organisational expertise and strength, to one that is based on the emergence of a common vision and mutual objectives. As well as public information, partners are picking up equally important signals about organisational culture, structure, style, which will enable them to respond more sensitively, one to another. (McGiveny, 1987) Particularly critical is handling imbalances of power and resource between partners, so that each feels able to make a valuable contribution. It is unrealistic to expect that there will be consensus in every detail between organisations with different missions, from different sectors and often even in competition with one another. However, the diversity can be a strength, once one has hammered out a sufficiently common purpose and brought hidden agenda out into the open.

I would propose that there are three levels of regional partnership, of increasing degrees of sophistication:

- the first exists where one organisation seeks the support of another (often financial) in a regional context to fulfil its own objectives;

- the second involves two or more organisations recognising overlapping objectives and seeking better to achieve them by regional collaboration;

- the third requires partners to have a vision of how the region's well-being affects their own, and as a consequence to focus upon, analyse and collaborate to meet its needs, even where that requires some accommodation in their own mode of operation.

The last would include, for example, the use of Labour Market Information for the region to predict and plan educational provision.

The lower levels are often characterised by arrangements of a contractual nature, which can have important benefits for accountability in the form of targets and milestones. However, the higher levels often lead to consortia or networks harnessing more creative relationships and greater commitment in the long term, which may result in, and indeed are increasingly required for, larger scale proposals for joint funding for value added activity towards regional regeneration. Such partnerships will inevitably demand a flexibility and responsiveness for which universities may not have been noted in the past, and indeed it is our experience that such flexibility as has more recently been introduced is as yet not well appreciated.

Partnerships need managing, if they are not to descend into stagnant talking shops, or ritualistic tokens of collaboration, or cosy clubs for people with similar interests. They need to agree strategies, objectives, targets and milestones and build in review of

achievements against them, sometimes even to agree that a job is complete and the network can be disbanded.

**Conclusions**

In conclusion, a university that wishes to engage fully with the regional mission will need to respond on three main fronts:

- accessibility to the widest range of students able to benefit, to increase the take up of education in a region and provide the basis for a highly skilled and motivated workforce;

- promoting and developing graduate employment opportunities;

- support for business, and especially new ventures and inward investors;

and it is important to appreciate the interconnectedness of the three.

There is still some considerable anxiety within the HE sector about being driven into regional identities and positions. However, if we can concentrate on the opportunity aspects, rather than the threats, we might find considerable reward in making those fuller contributions to our communities that are proudly understood and demonstrated in many European countries and in the United States of America, and also more pragmatically find equal reward in the alternative sources of funding that are frequently opened by them.

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## FUNDING BODIES

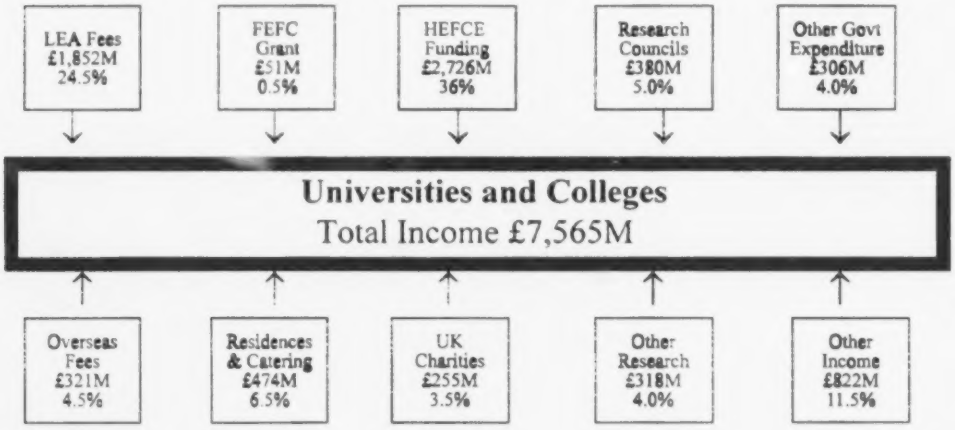
**by David Grugeon**

### Introduction

The Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) is the largest patron in England, as set out below in Figure One.

**Figure One**

**Main Source of Funding for HEIs in 1993/94.**




(Source: *A Guide to Funding Higher Education in England.* HEFCE, 1995)

A broader breakdown occurs in Table 2 below, taken from a paper by Professor Gareth Williams. (CIHE, 1996) Different universities receive funds from various public sources e.g. NHS, Teacher Training Agency, contracts from other Government departments and agencies. Meanwhile, there is a growing diversity of income in HE from contracts with companies, professional associations and charitable bodies.

**Issues for UACE**

- If CE is now "colonising the mainstream," what about UK universities making a CPD commitment to all alumni? (cf MIT's undertaking to update its graduates throughout their working lives). (Watson, 1996)

- What are the implications of Individual Learning Accounts (ILA) and new forms of continuing income from individuals, employers and the state?

- What is likely to be the impact of new regional structures for strategic planning of post secondary education and training?

**Table Two**

**Percentage Distribution of Main Sources of Income of Tertiary Education Institutions and Students in England 1993-94**

| | Higher Education | FE Colleges |
|---|---|---|
| Institutional Income | % | % |
| Funding Councils | | |
| Teaching | 29 | 68 |
| Research | 8 | 0 |
| Research Councils | 5 | ** |
| LEAS/TECS | n.a. | 9 |
| Other Government | n.a. | 3 |
| LEA paid fees | 25 | 10 |
| Overseas fees | 4 | ** |
| Research Grants and contracts | 9 | ** |
| Other | 19 | 13 |
| TOTAL (£Mn) = 100% | 7,565 | 3,507 |
| Student Living Expenses† | % | % |
| Public Funds | | |
| Grants | 56 | n.a. |
| Loans | 9 | n.a. |
| Households‡ | 35 | n.a. |
| TOTAL(£Mn) = 100% (1992-93 updated) | 1,640 | n.a. |
| GRAND TOTAL | 10,105 | n.a. |

** Less than 0.5%; † Full-time undergraduate students only; ‡ Assessed parental contributions

Sources: HEFCE (1995); DfE Statistical Bulletin 22/93 & 3/94; Private communication from the FEFC

**The Uncertainties of Public Funding**

Table Two shows the main income-sources of tertiary education institutions in the early 1990s. Nearly three-quarters of the colleges' revenue and 40 per cent of that of universities comes through government Funding Councils. Student fees account for about 6 per cent of college income and 30 per cent of university income, though the fees paid by full-time UK and other European Union undergraduates are included with their government grants. All in all central government provides about 90 per cent of the colleges' income and 70 per cent of that of the universities.

Until 1980 it was widely believed that public funding through an intermediate or "buffer" agency protected higher education from the vagaries of the market. However, recent sharp changes in public policy make it hard to claim that as an advantage. The two biggest jolts were the Education Reform Act of 1988 and the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992, but there have been many other changes of policy, strategy and administrative regulation as well as big variations in the amount of funds available.

Radical changes in all three constituents of tertiary education were imposed on a system that before 1980 had become accustomed to considerable stability in its funding arrangements. Private sector critics claimed that universities expected too much certainty in an uncertain world. The fact is, however, that recent years' policy and management changes have created environmental turbulence as severe as any faced by free market organisations of equivalent size. Excessive security has given way to unreasonable uncertainty.

Incentives to expansion, for example, were sharply increased and then suddenly withdrawn. After the 1988 Education Reform Act funding arrangements powerfully encouraged universities to recruit "extra" students for the "fees only" (i.e. without additional block-grant subsidy). That policy pushed down average costs per student and penalised universities that did not take part in the expansion. Institutions found that their financial health depended on their capacity to recruit additional students.

Headlong expansion followed. The effect was to reduce public expenditure per student by 25 per cent, but also to increase *total* public expenditure on higher education by 25 per cent. Government concern about excessive demands on public funds led to its 1993 decision that there should be no further publicly funded growth in higher education until 1997, a restraint since extended to 1999. Undergraduate fees were reduced to about 20 per cent of costs and the severe financial penalties introduced for universities and colleges that recruited "fees only" students. Some found themselves trapped by financial commitments undertaken on the assumption of continued expansion.

It is quite clear now that a system of finance and regulation appropriate for a relatively small elite higher education system cannot simply be diluted to meet the needs of much extended tertiary education. This paper is a contribution to the national debate that is essential during the next few years.

**New Sources**

- **Alumni**

As funding shifts away from massive dependence on central funding from government via the Funding Council, individual HEIs will need to build on successful relationships with individual learners for continuing, recurring and lifelong study. Hence, as marketing language puts it, "repeat business" is cheaper to get than "new" business. Satisfied "customers" (i.e. former students) are also our best ambassadors to encourage local and regional learners, networks and organisations to come to us. As more of our funding will come from the individual learners (via loans, grants, employer support) more of our learners will be local, both to study as economically as possible and to study more flexibly. Successful learners in the localities we serve are our frontline recruiting agents and likely to come back for more, for continuing refreshment, updating, personal and professional development.

- **The Learning Bank**

Individual Learning Accounts put planning in the hands of individuals. One political party is talking of providing £150 to one million adults in a year. Employee Development schemes on similar lines have run for tens of thousands of people for nearly a decade in the UK. We need to adapt our analysis of learner needs to encompass the new purchaser power and offer a "walk-in/phone-in" quality of advice, guidance, information, tuition, assessment and accreditation that is responsive to the short-term and mid-term interests of divers groups and individuals.

- **New Regional Structures**

Strategic planning of post secondary education and training is likely to be enhanced at regional level. At civil servant level there are already the Government Offices for the English Regions, straddling central government department's interests, set up in order to enable European funding to be accessed at regional level. It is possible to envisage new forms of regional strategic planning for further education and training, based on FEFC regions and drawing in TECs and Local Authority representation. The main concentration is likely to be at sub-degree levels and VQ levels 1-3. However, there will be an inevitable impact on regional HE and a number of regional HE groups are already emerging.

**Conclusion**

The UGC had a profound impact on the work of the Universities after it was set up in 1919. The inevitable drift was away from a broad mixed economy of younger and older, full-time and part-time students, to the most immense concentration of full-time students in the western-world. The likely changes in funding post-Dearing point to a world in which the broader remit of UK Universities, for Lifelong Learning, may be resumed and massively extended. If we do not take up these opportunities now, the big companies will invest in their own CPD programmes and lose us a substantial part of our mission, market, funding, quality and excellence.

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## THE IMPACT OF RESEARCH

**by Tom Schuller**

This piece should probably provide an empirical overview or a coherent framework for thinking about the impact of research in the CE field. It does neither. It is a series of reflections on what might be meant by "the impact of research". The reflections are based on some experience of doing research in this field, including submitting bids for research funding, and some experience of reading journals and other publications where research results are published. These are common to most colleagues, though the impressions I derive from them may not be. In addition, the reflections incorporate conclusions from an ESRC seminar series, run jointly with Pamela Munn (then of SCRE, now of Moray House Institute of Education) on adult education research in Scotland; and a series of discussions held with senior local and national (i.e. Scottish) policy-makers as part of an initiative I have been running under the clumsy title of Policy Research Interchange, intended to improve the dialogue between university researchers and policy-makers in a range of social and economic policy fields: health, law, local government, as well as education.

I shall break the issue down into a number of questions, and supply possible answers only to some.

I should come clean at the start. The account seems to me largely negative. That is to say, I do not have the impression that CE research has had much impact, beyond the CE community itself. Even there, there does not seem to me to be much evidence that research has influenced action or thinking very directly.

**The Research Community**

This could be split into two: the CE research community, such as it is, and other researchers. We need of course to ask, in good empiricist fashion, what would count as "impact"? An initial specification in this context would be readership, citation and discussion by other research communities, and evidence of internal dialogue and cumulative evidence-building in the internal research community.

As far as the former is concerned, I would judge that the impact has been minimal; in other words, there are very few cases where what is classified as CE research can be seen to have influenced researchers in other fields or disciplines. By this I mean that it has provided neither theoretical frameworks or concepts for others to adopt in their own fields, nor empirical results which others have related to their own studies. This may be because CE research is unknown to others (because it is not published in places where they normally look), or because it does not strike them as good enough to merit serious attention.

As for the latter, my impression is that it is only in the history of adult education, and perhaps also in feminist research, that there is a real sense of engagement between different schools or studies, that is, there is little direct empirical weighing of discrete bodies of evidence to see if they confirm or conflict with each other, or competing interpretations of the same evidence.

**Policy-makers**

What influences policy-makers? This can be broken down into two parts: (a) what do policy-makers want? and (b) what might influence them even though they don't appear to want it?

On question (a), policy-makers want, above all, research which provides answers to questions which concern them; which provides the answers in language which they can understand and assimilate quickly; and which provides those answers relatively quickly. This holds good in most policy areas, and academics generally are not particularly good in any of the three aspects. Sometimes this is deliberate and for good reason, for instance where there is a refusal to provide a simple answer to a complex question. In other cases it is because of lack of the requisite skills - how to write simply for a non-technical audience; or lack of an appropriate attitude, for example, how to say something simply when what you have to say is something simple.

Timescale is a major issue. Policy-makers are often regarded as setting time limits which are impossible. This refers to start-up times (the EC being particularly notorious in this respect), to the execution of the research and to the reporting/dissemination.

Dissemination is an intriguing issue. The ESRC, and indeed all research councils, now put a great deal of stress on users and beneficiaries, in my view rightly if somewhat artificially. Dissemination has moved away from a sequential model - first do the research, then tell people about it - to a more concurrent model: consult people about the substance of the research beforehand, ensure their co-operation, and reach an agreement early on how results are to be fed back and out, on a provisional/intermediary as well as a definitive basis. The greater salience of dissemination has considerable implications for CE as practice: CE can be seen as intermediary between researchers and publics on a continuous basis, and not just through courses and student numbers.

On question (b), research may well influence policy-makers even though they have not chosen to fund it. I can think of three types of this:

- Long-term cumulative research, e.g. of a longitudinal kind. This is rare, because it is expensive and because the funders are unlikely to be around to see the results. It would be galling for a politician to commit scarce resources to a major longitudinal

study which is just starting to bear fruit when elections arrive. Under this heading I can think of no parallels to Tuijnman's work in Sweden.

- Research in unexplored areas which turns up unexpected results, either as a planned outcome or serendipitously. I can think of relatively few surprises in CE research.

- Evaluations. These are increasingly funded by policy-makers; but evaluation research is underdeveloped here, certainly compared with the US. Most of the evaluation reports on CE are provided by those responsible for the programme itself; they are honest, but necessarily lack the edge of external evaluation.

All of the above helps to explain the shift on the part of policy-maker funding away from academic research funding towards consultants. Consultants generally deliver quickly, on time, to a brief and in accessible format and language. In some measure this is corruption of the research process, where "research" turns up the answer required. It generally allows no scope for the exploration which supposedly characterises high-level research. Yet why should studies be devalued just because they are done quickly, or by people with no track record in their field, or have no long prologue re-citing work already carried out? Consultants may be more subservient to the customer's requirements than academics, but not necessarily so - and they may well be able to depart more radically from established paradigms and assumptions.

**Practice**

How far does research influence practice? It is the proud boast in some quarters that theory and practice inform each other. Certainly I used to find curious what I understood to be the practice in Germany of divorcing the teaching of adult education from its actual delivery - surely an example of intellectual abstraction. Now I am no longer so sure. What is the evidence that research, theoretical or empirical, significantly influences practice? Might it not be the case that the daily integration of

theory and practice never allows full theoretical approaches to develop, as they are always coloured by the researcher's adherence to a certain practice? Alternatively, is there sometimes a disjunction between theory as espoused and the actual practice?

**Summary: Some Final Questions**

- How do we know when research has an impact on the various constituencies?
- Are there counter examples to the proposition that CE research has not impacted on research in other fields?
- How creative/cumulative is the internal dialogue amongst CE researchers?
- What skills are required, and desirable, for CE researchers to influence policy-makers? Are there outstanding examples of good practice in this respect?
- What are the implications of the new emphasis on users/beneficiaries for the relationship between CE and research?
- Is the relationship between theory, research and practice in CE a healthy one?

# A REVISED MANIFESTO

## FUTURE SCENARIOS

**by Susanne Haselgrove**

### University Continuing Education Today

In preparing this presentation the quotation which sprang to my mind was Charles Dickens' opening sentence of *A Tale of Two Cities* - "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times". In many ways the Association is enjoying the most flourishing period of its history - not only are almost all UK universities now in active membership but UACE is routinely consulted by Government and its agencies. The Network structures mean that involvement in activities facilitated by UACE permeates widely through member universities, conferences and workshops attract large enrolments and the Association's finances are healthy. Furthermore, lifelong learning is now firmly on the mainstream agenda in relation to economic and education policy formation for all political parties. The numbers of individuals participating in all forms of lifelong learning continue to grow and increasing numbers of employers are recognising the need to support the development and growth of their workforce. For those who battled through the quagmires of university senates and administrations to win recognition for the work they did and the achievements of their students, this new reality and the current high national profile must be heart-warming.

On closer inspection, however, we do not inhabit a Panglossian universe. Many of the university departments who pioneered extramural teaching no longer exist as discrete entities and some do not exist at all. The market segmentation which has begun within UK higher education means that some Vice-Chancellors and Senates are questioning the role of continuing education within their portfolio of activities. Given the parlous state of university funding even where continuing education has a continuing role, that role is increasingly to contribute to profitable income. So the balance continues to shift. In many post 1992 universities continuing education was always part of the

mainstream, especially in vocational areas. However, for these universities too its role has now to be justified alongside the consequences of growth in full-time students and an increasing emphasis on research. Nevertheless, it is the post 1992 sector to which the majority of full-time mature students go and where more open accreditation policies allow accelerated study on a range of both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

We must not forget furthermore that increasing numbers of individuals participate in continuing education activities which have no links to universities. In addition to National Vocational Qualifications studied and assessed wholly within the workplace further education colleges continue to build their portfolio of continuing education provision much of which is in areas traditionally delivered by the post 1992 universities. Professional bodies are also now major providers of a wide range of lifelong learning opportunities and information technology opens up possibilities of accessing learning from wherever the World Wide Web reaches.

So, then, UACE exists within a world of both opportunities and threats.

**UACE's Position**

There can be no doubt that the increasing diversity of its membership provides the Association with some major difficulties. For universities like my own, provision for adult learners is our core business. Including people studying our open learning programmes abroad, part-time adult learners now make up over 70% of our students and we are increasingly developing academic and administrative infrastructures which take account of these learners' needs. Mature students also predominate among our full-time students and the majority of all full-time students engage in regular paid work alongside their academic and domestic commitments. Other member institutions have discrete continuing education departments which are the focus for their institution's interactions with adult students. Numerically these departments may have as many if

not more registered students than the rest of the university but because of the institutional mission they are at the periphery rather than the core. Full-time school leavers and research are often the core business of such universities.

Such variations bring about difficulties for institutions. Who do they nominate as their representatives on UACE Council? For institutions with large numbers of part-time and mature students few people other than senior managers have the institutional overview. Such individuals have, however, many other responsibilities and find it hard to prioritise involvement with the Association. Furthermore, they may often find it difficult to know whom else to involve in UACE activities since many other colleagues have a range of interests and concerns which are rarely defined as continuing education. Even in institutions with continuing education departments it may be difficult for individuals to find the resources to participate in UACE because of budgetary constraints and the pressure on them to represent their universities on all aspects of adults' learning.

How then does UACE interact successfully with these extremes amongst its member institutions as well as all the others which lie on the continuum between? The easy answer is, of course, to offer a range of activities and discussion topics which are of common interest. It is, however, difficult to be clear about what those might be. There is no doubt that in recent years exercises such as the mainstreaming of continuing education in pre-1992 universities have formed a core concern of the Association and its officers. There is also no doubt that this exercise was both traumatic and consuming for those involved in managing the transition. Nevertheless, we are all now in a common system in which predominantly part-time students in universities are studying on award-bearing programmes funded through the same methodology. This is the new reality. Clearly there are many for whom the grieving process for the past will go on; it cannot go on any longer for the Association. We must look to the future.

**The Future**

Given the new reality, therefore, I shall put forward my wish list for the future:

- Change the name of the Association as soon as practicable - *lifelong learning* captures much more closely our common concerns for the future.

- Charge Council members with surveying their colleagues about topics they believe the Association should be concerned with and asking who would be interested in various existing and proposed activities. This approach would also serve as publicity for existing activities.

- Set up more newsgroups on the Internet.

- Actively promote UACE publications as a medium for the dissemination of all forms of lifelong learning activities in universities.

- To promote attendance at Council meetings make them all day with high-powered seminars which build on the success of the presentations at recent meetings.

- Reduce the number of Council meetings but require regular briefings to be prepared for members by network convenors and the Executive. These should not be minutes but information sharing exercises and opportunities to seek views. These should be available electronically.

- Develop further European and other international links.

- Seek to influence further the CVCP to recognise that higher education is not predominantly for full-time students and promote lifelong learning as at the core of UK higher education.

- Seek to influence the Funding Councils' debates on future funding to recognise the needs of both institutions and their adult constituencies.

**Conclusion**

I have been fortunate to participate in UACE both from a pre- and post-1992 university and I continue to be convinced of its value. I am also convinced that in order to remain successful the Association needs to continue to change and evolve. A demonstration of our commitment to lifelong learning must be a recognition that successful organisations need to adapt while retaining the core and essence of their mission.

## MARGINALISING THE MAINSTREAM

**by Hywel Francis**

### A War of Position

Implicit in the title of this collection is the recognition that UACE is already on a particular journey which has required or will require a cultural shift on the part of both those previously involved in continuing education and all those currently involved in higher education.

This cultural shift is essentially about the medium-term consequences of the funding changes which takes us beyond the rhetoric of moving continuing education from the margins to the mainstream. The term "lifelong learning" implies something qualitatively different. It means that the whole higher education sector changes fundamentally. That change has already been prefigured by the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education's (NIACE) discussion document *An Adult Higher Education* (1993), David Robertson's report *Choosing to Change* (1994), and the lecture by Professor John Andrews, Chief Executive of the Higher Education Funding Council Wales (HEFCW) at the UACE Annual Conference in Swansea in 1995 when he threw down the provocative challenge that continuing education was being mainstreamed in order to change the mainstream: hence my title. Can UACE really respond and go a step further and actually help marginalise the lingering elitist culture of the mainstream, which Professor Andrews so eloquently characterised thus:-

> "In summary, a monastic aspect has dominated the university world and is illustrated by some of its most fundamental phenomena. Essentially it has been male only, residential and excessively introspective. (Andrews, 1996)

In a nutshell, it is as the NIACE discussion document suggested in 1993: higher education is an experience not a specific place, location or campus. UACE, perhaps uniquely, finds itself potentially at the centre of this higher education debate about the shape, purpose and funding of the whole sector. That, I assume, is what this seminar is about: how UACE strategically locates itself and helps influence that debate in the run up to the Dearing Report.

What complicates the challenge however is the diversity within the sector: many institutions are well down the road whilst others are only now beginning and all this is set against a background of crisis of funding which threatens to inhibit strategies of widening access and innovation.

**Key Locations and Key Issues**

The Department for Education and Employment's (DfEE), document *Lifetime Learning* (1995) failed to set any new agenda and avoided the central question of funding for part-time students: mo the Committee of the Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP). It is more likely that the locus of the debate in the coming period will be determined more by the Labour Party's consultation paper *Lifelong Learning* (published on 21 May 1996) and the CVCP's radical response to the DfEE's document. (N/96/44a)

The main elements of the CVCP and the Labour Party documents provide UACE with a good starting point. They should be re-worked and put into a wider context. For the purposes of this seminar it would be worthwhile summarising these main elements, even if it is only to remind ourselves how much Continuing Education (CE) has contributed to recent policy formulation:

- Funding: there is an explicit acknowledgement that there should be "equitable treatment for part-time students, part-time employees, unemployed,

unwaged and retired". This would include fee remissions for those not in work and better child care support. (CVCP, 1996) But these will remain grand rhetorical flourishes without a Government funding steer as many Vice-Chancellors will retreat into a twilight world of A levels, full-time eighteen year olds and the 1950s. Labour's *Lifelong Learning* mirrors this tendency of over-concentration on the full-time student.

- Regional Partnerships: these have become increasingly important, encouraged by the EU White Paper, *Teaching and Learning - Towards the Learning Society* (1995). However, the CVCP prioritising of economic imperatives should be balanced by community linkages with local government and a range of social movements (e.g. women's groups, trade unions, environmental groups, etc.). The strategy of regional partnerships should not only be about local economic regeneration; it should also address the question of social exclusion and a democratic relationship with the local community which in turn should help shape the university's teaching and research agenda.

- Learning: the shift towards a more diverse and mass higher education system has also meant that open and distance learning strategies have been greatly encouraged and increased. Modularity, credit accumulation and transfer, franchising, access and foundation have all led to the culture shift beyond campus based learning to home based learning, community based learning, work based learning, further education based learning. This shift is accelerating with new technology so that some UK universities are already in the virtual global classroom. The opportunities are therefore enormous but, as the CVCP rightly acknowledges, "new technology is not of itself a universal panacea".

- Advice, Guidance and Progression: it is very encouraging that key bodies such as the CVCP and the Labour Party now acknowledge the importance of student support and student centred learning, strategies pioneered by CE, particularly bodies like the Unit for the Development of Adult Continuing

Education (UDACE) in the late 1980s. The extent, however, to which such advice and guidance is internalised within the HE system is a moot point. The question of access to objective advice, guidance and information by the "socially excluded" is a matter which needs addressing urgently.

**Modernising UACE's Role and Vision.**

In attempting to get beyond the rhetoric of "the learning society" and mainstreaming CE in order to achieve lifelong learning HE institutions, UACE needs to reflect on what its priorities ought to be in the coming period. It is clearly not about self-preservation, safeguarding a precious sector within a precious sector. It is more about a vision of the whole of higher education being transformed on the basis of equity, social justice and making a substantial contribution to the social and economic well being of our society.

To sum up, my "towards 2000" agenda for UACE would be as follows:

- Most important of all, UACE in partnership with such bodies as SCUTREA, SRHE and NIACE must be at the heart of *research* into higher education, actively involved and leading in the crucial area of participatory research. This is what distinguishes (or potentially distinguishes) UACE from all others: it combines theory and practice and has a vision of a higher education dedicated to the social justice principle of lifelong learning. It is only through the combination of the dissemination of best practice *and* research that we will make an impact at all on the present debate. What is envisaged is UACE becoming *the* HE think-tank: if UACE does not take this on, some other body will (NIACE)?

- *Advocacy* for a new kind of HE based on equity, social justice, socio-economic regeneration and a larger mass system. As the *Guardian's*

editorial rightly stated recently: "Doubling the participation rate in higher education has been one of the biggest social revolutions of the decade. But it has still not gone far enough. Both the Vice-Chancellors' and British industry want to see 40% by the end of this century. Such a target needs to be celebrated for its wider goals: more equal opportunity, better access to economic ladders, wider opportunities for personal development. A few elitists will grumble. They should be reminded the target for the year 2000 is below the levels already achieved in Australia, France, Germany, Sweden, Belgium, Japan and America". (18 August 1996).

- Helping to provide a *wider perspective* for HE, taking it firmly and finally away from a elitist system towards Professor John Andrews' vision: "We need to take the university world to the outside world and to bring the outside world into the university". This will include addressing robustly the FE/HE interface, European and international perspectives, stronger regional relationships particularly with those groups and organisations which will access the socially excluded.

- Encourage *innovation now in HE not CE*. This shift has already been made with UACE's pioneering initiatives in, for example, work based learning.

- *Collaboration/Partnership* of various kinds are essential in achieving "regional/community" universities. CE practitioners have again been at the cutting edge of this work. The relationships must be diverse and multi-faceted encouraging better democratic access, negotiated curricula and economic regeneration and technology transfer.

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## UNFINISHED BUSINESS - THE CONTINUING ROLE OF A CONTINUING EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

by Maria Slowey

### A Background Comment

As an association concerned with continuing education we find ourselves in the position we have long sought - at the centre of a much wider social and political agenda. "Lifelong learning" has become a political buzz phrase on the lips of every politician and social commentator. The rhetoric, if not the reality, of the structures and forms of provision long promoted by continuing educators have become central planks in the strategies for economic and social renewal and regeneration that are now widely canvassed by left and right alike. Gone, for the time being at any rate, are the days when political debate was informed by "ideological" considerations. Instead, a new pragmatism has taken hold of the body politic with a broad consensus that what we now need, as a necessary condition for success (if not survival) in a very competitive world, is a more highly skilled, flexible workforce capable of responding to changes in the knowledge base of society - there remains, of course, considerably less consensus about the importance of broader social and individual purposes of education.

At a time when the whole of society is being urged to embrace new skills and competencies, it is particularly important that we, as adult educators, should do likewise. In fact, if we are to play any significant role in this drive towards lifelong learning then we, as practitioners, must be exemplars, and our professional association must be at the leading edge of change and innovation. It is therefore appropriate that, as an association, we should take the time to review our position.

As an association the membership of UACE is particularly interesting in comprising professionals who have come to the field of continuing education (broadly defined)

from a very wide range of academic disciplines. This prompted me to reread Becher's (1993) study of academics as professionals and the related issues of the epistemology and sociology of disciplines. He advances a typology of different knowledge domains based on a number of variables - one of which he labels, rather quixotically, "urban/rural". Within his framework, continuing education would undoubtedly be located towards the "rural" end of the spectrum. This end is supposedly associated with, amongst other things, a low people-to-problem ratio, absence of "fight to the death" academic competition, low publication levels, and "cottage industry" style of operation. Informal communication is essential, he argues, for all academic knowledge domains, but he maintains that at our end of the spectrum the role of "gossip" is more likely to " . . . take the form of rumour and the dissection of personalities rather than the more sternly professional shop talk indulged in by serious-minded (sic) scientists.. ." (Becher 1993, pp. 82-88)

This is not the place to pursue the merits of the case he makes (more appropriate for discussion at the bar later) but it is useful to stand back and consider the nature of our own knowledge domain and explore the role of one of its key communication and professional bodies.

As an organisation, in common with all organisations, UACE has a vested interest in self-perpetuation. Clearly therefore the question which needs to be addressed before we can look to a manifesto for the future is the extent to which UACE appears to serve broader functions than simply the self-interest of its members. This is a difficult question to answer - particularly for those of us who are closely involved in UACE activities. However, I would argue that there is no other organisation which sets out to fulfil all of the following five important functions.

- The promotion of the interest of adult learners within a higher education environment.

- Networking for professionals working in this area.

- Lobbying - within policy and political arenas.

- Information dissemination on developments and research relating to higher education.

- Critical analysis of social and general economic trends impacting on post-compulsory education and training.

Clearly UACE does not fulfil all these functions equally well all the time but, in my view, its grade point average must be pretty high!

However, regardless of the level of success achieved by the organisation the changes which are sweeping higher education make a review timely. A secondary reason why this is an appropriate time to take stock arises from what might be termed an acceleration in the organisational life cycle. Chronologically, UACE is a relatively young organisation, so it may perhaps seem a little early to be experiencing a mid-life change of direction. However, it is an organisation which grew out of a merger between two previously existing associations with their own complementary, but different, traditions. In practice there had been surprisingly little overlap or even contact between PACE and UCACE members or activities. Because they were so few, I can still, for example, recall the names of the individual UCACE members who did make a point of attending PACE events while I was a member of the Executive. It strikes me, therefore, that it is really only at this stage we have a real sense of moving towards a new common agenda rather than one formed from something of a shotgun marriage, prompted primarily by the abolition of the binary divide and the funding changes ensuing from the creation of the new Funding Councils.

**Two Further Questions**

In looking to the future of UACE it is important to seek to identify what, if any, distinctive contribution it makes compared to the many other bodies with significantly overlapping interests. The essential distinguishing characteristic of UACE is that it focuses on *continuing education* explicitly within a *higher education* environment. This begs two questions. Firstly, given the changing nature of higher education and the case put forward by, amongst others, NIACE, that higher education should be regarded more as a *form of learning* than the prerogative of particular *types of institutions*, then is there a role for organisations which open formal membership only to higher education institutions? It seems to me that the clear answer to this question is yes. While not disputing the breaking down of learning boundaries, and the fact that possibly the major part of learning at a higher level takes place in bodies other than universities and formal institutions of higher education, it remains the case that universities are powerful institutions and that the awards which they confer on people are directly associated with broadly enhanced career, personal and social opportunities.

If we accept that there is a need for organisations which take as the explicit focus of their attention a critical analysis of the operation of institutions of higher education this leads us to a second question. Assuming the whole higher education system is, as is often claimed, becoming an integral part of a lifelong learning framework, then is there a need for an organisation which takes *continuing education* as its explicit focus? Once again the answer to this question in my view is in the affirmative. The statistics certainly show that mature students now constitute about half of all new entrants to the system, and much of the rhetoric espoused by continuing educators now forms part of the general vocabulary of higher education. However, research findings on the student experience, and the direct experience of professionals working in the field still indicate significant ways in which the system is simply not geared towards the needs of adult learners. Clearly some parts of the system are better orientated than others, and within institutions there are variations in practice across different departments and discipline

areas, but the fact remains that there is a need for an organisation which continues to highlight the very diverse interests and needs of a broad community of adult learners.

None of this will be new to this particular audience. We are all fully immersed - possibly to the point of drowning - in discussions and analysis about the implications of moving from an elite to a mass system. In this respect, it is interesting to look at the experience of other systems of higher education. Personally, I was involved in an OECD project about a decade ago which involved a comparative study of adult participation in higher education. At that time, the system in the United States and, in a very different way, that in Sweden stood out as being in Kenneth Abrahamsson's memorable terminology, the most "adultified". Writing in 1987, for example, Lynton and Elman discussed what they call the "dilemma of continuing education" in the United States. This dilemma occurred, they argued, because no clear distinction any longer existed between continuing education and what might at one time have been thought of as regular education.

> We saw that at least half of all undergraduates interrupt their studies for a minimum of one year, but the proportion of part-time enrolments in colleges and universities is steadily increasing, and that the average age of students on our urban, commuter campuses is now twenty-seven or twenty-eight. The "non-traditional" student is becoming the norm. In addition, the accelerating obsolescence of knowledge increasingly requires that we see education as a recurrent and lifelong process, involved as much with the maintenance of competence as with its initial development. Hence, the traditional distinction between education of the young and education of adults is becoming blurred, as is the difference between those who continue post secondary studies immediately after high school and those who return to the classroom at some later stage. (Lynton and Elman 1987, p. 97)

Doesn't this all have a contemporary and familiar ring to it! Lynton and Elman go on to argue that it is precisely because regular education is becoming indistinguishable from continuing education that ". . . each institution needs to make the fullest possible use of continuing education experts." (Lynton and Elman 1987, p.98) Writing at the same time Martin Trow came to the same conclusion:

> In America's system of mass higher education, with large and increasing numbers of students over 25 who work part-time or full-time, many with families, continuing education and higher education are mixed beyond recognition. Much of graduate education, and especially postgraduate professional studies, involved mature students. . . Mass higher education in the United States has destroyed the boundaries of continuing or adult education. (Trow 1987, p.85)

While I am strongly of the view, as I have already indicated, that the real experience of adult learners in many parts of higher education at present is more likely to be of a system which has been "tweaked" to accommodate them rather than one in which they are genuinely at the centre, it is also important not to understate the progress and change which has taken place in higher education. This point can be illustrated by reference to a recent development within my own institution. The University of Glasgow is currently in the process of developing a new College of the University at Crichton in Dumfries and Galloway. The working papers emerging from the group charged with developing the academic plan for the new campus read as though they have been drawn up by one of the relevant UACE Networks! The College, it is proposed, will place a large emphasis on attracting *mature students* from the locality, the provision will be offered in *flexible ways* supporting *mixed mode delivery* - thereby allowing for accelerated (and "decelerated") periods in which students can obtain awards; there is a focus on the use of *IT* with proposals to link the site to the Clyde Metropolitan Area Network; it is further proposed that the curriculum will have a major emphasis on *inter-disciplinary studies*; that there will be opportunities for the *assessment of prior learning* and also opportunities for vocationally orientated

programmes with an emphasis on *placements* and *service learning*. The College itself is being developed in close *partnership* with other bodies, in particular the *local authority* and the *Local Enterprise Company* (the equivalent of the TEC in England). In other words, the academic plan looks as near as possible to what some of us regard as a continuing educator's ideal of a higher education institution.

In this context, therefore, is there any special role for professionals with an emphasis on continuing education? Once again I believe the answer is in the affirmative. While the emerging academic plan indicates to quite an extent the "mainstreaming" (can we not find another term?) of continuing education and lifelong learning ideals, there is still much work to be done. Colleagues from the Department of Adult and Continuing Education have been involved in delivering adult education courses in Dumfries and Galloway for many years and have fostered close links with the local authority on which further collaborative ventures can be built. The work of continuing educators is important in seeking to ensure that the community links which are emphasised in such plans actually come to fruition. A rural area such as Dumfries and Galloway raises issues of geographical access, while social and educational barriers require collaboration with a broader range of institutions and organisations in order to ensure that disadvantaged sections of the community will also gain access to these exciting new facilities.

Case studies of this kind could be provided by UACE members throughout the UK. This example simply serves to illustrate the continuing need for specialists with a particular focus on part-time and adult learners within higher education - and, by extension, an association which represents these interests.

**A New Manifesto - Some Ideas**

Everyone will have their own ideas about where we as an organisation should be going. I make no claims that my own are any more than a personal view or in any way

definitive. However, it seems to me that there are perhaps six key areas that we should seek to enhance and develop.

- **Breadth of Purpose**

  UACE necessarily concerns itself with the higher education sector. Because of this we must acknowledge that we are essentially a sect within the broader church of lifelong learning (represented by bodies such as NIACE). It is essential, however, that we place a high priority on maintaining and developing our links beyond the boundaries of the higher education sector. To pursue the religious analogy - we should try to be as ecumenical as possible.

  To some extent, we have succeeded in representing all aspects of continuing education as they impinge on our sector - part-time degrees, community education, liberal adult education, continuing professional development, access, women's education etc. Maintaining this breadth of purpose must remain a priority for the future.

- **Operational Levels**

  As a national organisation it is fair to say that UACE has worked very well in recent years. I think the emphasis in the coming period should be in two directions - looking down to the regional level and out to the international arena. There are already thriving regional, effectively semi-autonomous, branches in Wales and Scotland. The relationship between these bodies and the parent organisation requires some further thought - particularly in relation to resource issues!

- **Information Technology**

At a time when the whole of society is being urged to embrace new skills and competencies, it is particularly important that we, as adult educators, should do likewise. The Internet in particular has profound implications for the way in which knowledge is collated, interrogated and disseminated. It is an information and learning resource that is both potentially very democratic and efficient. As continuing educators it is imperative that we become conversant with this technology and make it available to all our students. So how do we bring this about? In the first instance we must endeavour to go "on-line" with our own activities. Every publication of UACE should be on the Internet, and every meeting, working group, and policy initiative should be published on this resource to make it available to the widest possible audience. Secondly, all adult education and related departments should be running courses to train adults in how to make the best use of this resource. This is not something that adult learners will have been taught at school - even if their children are - and if we don't do it, who will? Surely, one of our key roles is to provide educational and training opportunities to adults who have been denied them in the past. The denial in this case is simply that arising from technological change, but we, as educators of adults, have an opportunity to make good this loss. I believe it is an opportunity that should not be missed.

- **Promotion of Equality of Opportunity**

The narrow emphasis on the economic imperative for lifelong learning which informs much of the present policy emphasis requires continuing rebuttal. UACE must play a central role in this process by highlighting issues of equality of opportunity, community access, and the combating of social exclusion. We also, I believe, need to be vigilant against the argument that there is no longer any need for a special focus on access by women to education and training. As

with the statistics on mature students, broad patterns of participation can conceal great disparities of opportunity.

- **Membership**

While being in some danger of laying myself open to the accusation of ageism, I do think it is important that we strive to attract younger professionals to become involved in UACE activities- or perhaps I should more correctly say, those who are coming new into our field. This is essential both for the life blood of the organisation, and because of the enormous support which UACE can offer to such individuals. Our aim should be to achieve a situation where colleagues from across the whole spectrum of higher education identify with UACE as much as those in departments and centres of continuing education - such colleagues would, to mention a few examples, include those involved in development studies in geography departments; in management education in business schools; in the field of health education in departments of nursing.

- **Drawing on our Community of Learners**

While at an institutional level many of us draw on our students to support the development of our work, it seems to me that this is something we have not really addressed within UACE. Surely there are ways in which we can tap into the resources and the enormous good will which exists amongst the growing sections of the population (across all walks of life) who have benefited in some way as an adult by "learning opportunities" offered by an institution of higher education?

A final word - personally, I have no objection to a name change for the association if somebody comes up with a good suggestion!

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## CONCLUSION:
## UACE AND THE FUTURE

**by David Watson**

The discussion that followed these papers unsurprisingly produced more confirmation of current UACE policies and priorities than controversy, although there was an undeniable undercurrent of unease. This, I suspect, arose more from the general sense of siege felt by those working in a system where resource levels (after several false such alarms in the past) can authentically be shown to be critical, than from real misgivings about goals and direction. Such unease is of course fuelled by the recognition that while official rhetoric is uniformly supportive of access, personal and professional development and lifelong learning, the consequences of underfunded expansion in these areas are not only felt most keenly by the practitioners, but largely officially ignored. In this field we are led by politicians who have willed the end but not the means.

As a result it is perhaps remarkable that the broad coalition of interests that is UACE has not fragmented. The organisation encompasses winners as well as losers, from recent policy pronouncements and (even more critically) from new funding regimes. Yet a sense of common purpose prevails, across institutions (we must be one of the most solid "post-binary" groups) and along the spectrum of professional specialisms (from the most unreconstructed "adult extensionists" to the most market-aware "vocationalists"). There is a shared understanding that all continuing education is ultimately emancipatory.

Lacking disagreements of this kind, it was predictable that more attention focused on the question of the name of the association. A test of those representatives prepared (through the medium of some voluntary overnight written homework) to consider a shift from "continuing education" to "lifelong learning" produced the following results:

FOR 6: AGAINST 5: UNDECIDED 10. Needless to say the "undecideds" either didn't like the question or had other ideas: one ardent consensualist suggested incorporating "lifelong learning" in a sub-title, along the lines of NATFHE's new identity as "the University and College Lecturers' Union."

The homework in question involved adding to a list of arguments for and against a change begun in discussion in plenary session. Table One (below) sets out the key considerations established.

**Table One**

**Change from "Continuing Education" to "Lifelong Learning"**

| FOR | AGAINST |
|---|---|
| more general appeal | too general |
| the choice as an EU "brand" | danger of yet another name change (see Duke, above) |
| a sector-wide (non-departmental) appeal | potential loss of "positioning" successes of UACE |
| preemption (of other groups possibly adopting it) | loss of the definitional links with CVE, CPD, CPE etc. |
| possible attraction of new constituencies | possible loss of links with "adult" and "access" interests |
| potential wider remit *within* member institutions | |
| potential attraction to other providers (like FE) | |

One respondent had the marketing implications firmly in mind when pointing out how "UACE" slips off the tongue in contrast to the alternatives of "UALL" and "ULLA"

(or even "DOLLS"). Another pointed out how neither alternative necessarily captured the full innovative force of a drive towards democracy, equity, and interdisciplinarity implied in much of our work. Morry van Ments reflected that "Radio Rentals hired consultants to suggest a new name; they recommended that the firm stick with their established name; no-one thinks that Radio Rentals rents radios." So, in the end, familiarity carried the day.

Personally, I find this a comfortable position. No contributor even hinted that UACE has got every thing right, or that the developmental agenda does not remain full and challenging. The fact that it is an agenda increasingly shared by the higher education system as a whole underlines how daunting it in fact is, even before Dearing reports.

## GLOSSARY

| | |
|---|---|
| ACE | Adult/Continuing Education |
| ALW | Adult Learners Week |
| APEL | Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning |
| CATS | Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme |
| CBI | Confederation of British Industry |
| CE | Continuing Education |
| CIHE | Council for Industry and Higher Education |
| CME | Continuing Medical Education |
| CNAA | Council for National Academic Awards |
| CPE | Continuing Professional Education |
| CPD | Continuing Professional Development |
| CVCP | Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals |
| CVE | Continuing Vocational Education |
| DES | Department of Education and Science |
| DfEE | Department for Education and Employment |
| EC | European Commission |
| ESRC | Economic and Social Research Council |
| EU | European Union |
| FACE | Forum for the Advancement of Continuing Education |
| FE | Further Education |
| FEFC | Further Education Funding Council |
| FTE | Full-Time Equivalent |
| GNVQ | General National Vocational Qualification |
| HE | Higher Education |
| HEQC | Higher Education Quality Council |
| HEFCE | Higher Education Funding Council for England |
| HEFCW | Higher Education Funding Council for Wales |
| HEIs | Higher Education Institutions |
| HESA | Higher Education Statistics Agency |

| | |
|---|---|
| HESIN | Higher Education Support for Industry in the North |
| ICDL | International Centre for Distance Learning |
| ILA | Individual Learning Accounts |
| JANET | Joint Academic Network |
| JISC | Joint Information and Systems Committee |
| LAE | Liberal Adult Education |
| LEA | Local Education Authority |
| LLL | LifeLong Learning |
| MANs | Metropolitan Area Networks |
| NAB | National Advisory Board |
| NATFHE | National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education |
| NCVQ | National Council for Vocational Qualifications |
| NCWBLP | National Centre for Work Based Learning Partnerships |
| NETTs | National Education and Training Targets |
| NIACE | National Institute of Adult Continuing Education |
| NVQs | National Vocational Qualifications |
| ODL | Open and Distance Learning |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| OFL | Open and Flexible Learning |
| OU | Open University |
| PACE | Polytechnics Association for Continuing Education |
| PCAS | Polytechnics Central Admissions System |
| PCFC | Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council |
| PICKUP | Professional, Industrial and Commercial Knowledge Updating |
| RB | Responsible Body |
| SCOP | Standing Conference of Principals |
| SHEFC | Scottish Higher Education Funding Council |
| SRHE | Society for Research into Higher Education |
| SCUTREA | Standing Conference for University Teaching and Research in the Education of Adults |

| | |
|---|---|
| TECs | Training and Enterprise Councils |
| TUC | Trades Union Congress |
| UACE | Universities Association for Continuing Education |
| UCACE | Universities Council for Adult and Continuing Education |
| UCAS | Universities and Colleges Admissions Service |
| UCCA | Universities Central Council on Admissions |
| UDACE | Unit for the Development of Adult Continuing Education |
| UFC | Universities Funding Council |
| UGC | University Grants Committee |
| WBL | Work-Based Learning |
| WEA | Workers Educational Association |

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